



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #287 — DEC. 10, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

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'Wealth Without Work...'

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Dec. 10, 2012)

It seems that the public beast can only think of one thing at a time. We just finished the ugliest election in the history of America, but election reform is forgotten. Our priceless schools and public infrastructure are crumbling. The war rages on. And employment, seemingly slowly on the mend, has been put on the back burner, though jobs are the engine of commerce—private and public, and of our recovery and future. But the Fiscal Cliff is out to get us and consumes the public's attention. Oh...yawn...woe is us...now, please pass me the Twinkies...

"The Forgotten Millions" by Paul Krugman, *The New York Times*

Dec. 6, 2012, (http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/07/opinion/krugman-the-forgotten-millions.html?_r=3&adxnnl=1&partner=rss&emc=rss&adxnnlx=1354885607-Jjys0AIQI5fi3FhblUtB5A&)



Let's get one thing straight: America is not facing a fiscal crisis. It is, however, still very much experiencing a job crisis.

It's easy to get confused about the fiscal thing, since everyone's talking about the "fiscal cliff." Indeed, one recent poll suggests that a large plurality of the public believes that the budget deficit will go up if we go off that cliff.

In fact, of course, it's just the opposite: The danger is that the deficit will come down too much, too fast. And the reasons that might happen are purely political; we may be about to slash spending and raise taxes not because markets demand it, but because Republicans have been using blackmail as a bargaining strategy, and the president seems ready to call their bluff.

Moreover, despite years of warnings from the usual suspects about the dangers of deficits and debt, our government can borrow at incredibly low interest rates — interest rates on inflation-protected U.S. bonds are actually negative, so investors are paying our government to make use of their money. And don't tell me that markets may suddenly turn on us. Remember, the U.S. government can't run out of cash (it prints the stuff), so the worst that could happen would be a fall in the dollar, which wouldn't be a terrible thing and might actually help the economy.

Yet there is a whole industry built around the promotion of deficit panic. Lavishly funded corporate groups keep hyping the danger of government debt and the urgency of deficit reduction now now now — except that these same groups are suddenly warning against too much deficit reduction. No wonder the public is confused.

Meanwhile, there is almost no organized pressure to deal with the terrible thing that is actually happening right now — namely, mass unemployment. Yes, we've made progress over the past year. But long-term unemployment remains at levels not seen since the Great Depression: as of October, 4.9 million Americans had been unemployed for more than six months, and 3.6 million had been out of work for more than a year.

When you see numbers like those, bear in mind that we're looking at millions of human tragedies: at individuals and families whose lives are falling apart because they can't find work, at savings consumed, homes lost and dreams destroyed. And the longer this goes on, the bigger the tragedy.

There are also huge dollars-and-cents costs to our unmet jobs crisis. When willing workers endure forced idleness society as a whole suffers from the waste of their efforts and talents. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that what we are actually producing falls short of what we could and should be producing by around 6 percent of G.D.P., or \$900 billion a year.

Worse yet, there are good reasons to believe that high unemployment is undermining our future growth as well, as the long-term unemployed come to be considered unemployable, as investment falters in the face of inadequate sales.

So what can be done? The panic over the fiscal cliff has been revelatory. It shows that even the deficit scolds are closet Keynesians. That is, they believe that right now spending cuts and tax hikes would destroy jobs; it's impossible to make that claim while denying that temporary spending increases and tax cuts would create jobs. Yes, our still-depressed economy needs more fiscal stimulus.

And, to his credit, President Obama did include a modest amount of stimulus in his initial budget offer; the White House, at least, hasn't completely forgotten about the unemployed. Unfortunately, almost nobody expects those stimulus plans to be included in whatever deal is eventually reached.

So why aren't we helping the unemployed? It's not because we can't afford it. Given those ultralow borrowing costs, plus the damage unemployment is doing to our economy and hence to the tax base, you can make a pretty good case that spending more to create jobs now would actually improve our long-run fiscal position.

Nor, I think, is it really ideology. Even Republicans, when opposing cuts in defense spending, immediately start talking about how such cuts would destroy jobs — and I'm sorry, but weaponized Keynesianism, the assertion that government spending creates jobs, but only if it goes to the military, doesn't make sense.

No, in the end it's hard to avoid concluding that it's about class. Influential people in Washington aren't worried about losing their jobs; by and large they don't even know anyone who's unemployed. The plight of the unemployed simply doesn't loom large in their minds — and, of course, the unemployed don't hire lobbyists or make big campaign contributions.

So the unemployment crisis goes on and on, even though we have both the knowledge and the means to solve it. It's a vast tragedy — and it's also an outrage.

Seven Deadly Sins (by Mahatma Gandhi)

*Wealth without work
Pleasure without conscience
Science without humanity
Knowledge without character
Politics without principle
Commerce without morality
Worship without sacrifice.*



FotM NEWSLETTER #287 (Dec. 10, 2012)—HYPERTEXT INDEX

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Maybe there is a Santa Claus... 'austerity' be damned!

"Money Can't Buy Them Love" by Robert Kuttner, Huffington Post

Dec. 9, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/robert-kuttner/fix-the-debt_b_2268952.html)

It is literally possible to have more money than you know what to do with. Take the case of the private-equity billionaire Peter G. Peterson, who has bankrolled much of the austerity crusade.

Peterson has now spent over half a billion dollars out of his personal fortune to persuade Americans that austerity is the necessary for the road to recovery. But the debate seems to be getting away from him. Peterson was heavily involved in the corporate-led group, "Fix the Debt." That effort has increasingly backfired. In Peterson's world, CEO spokesmen are a source of great credibility. But out in America, it doesn't look so good when the millionaire CEOs who cut jobs and pay low rates of taxes lecture others to tighten their belts.

Time for a new set of spokesmen. Peterson's latest front group is something called the Coalition for Fiscal and National Security, which ran full-page ads in major newspapers last week. The gimmick, as the ad declared, is that "U.S. National Security in the 21st century rests on both economic and military strength." So if you want to keep al-Qaeda at bay, it logically follows that we need to cut Social Security and Medicare. Well, it does in Peterson's circle.

The ad was signed by doddering former national security officials such as Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, James Baker, Sam Nunn, et al. They should know plenty about national security and the debt, having run up trillions of dollars in excess military spending.

Poor Pete Peterson is running out of categories of concerned citizens to associate with the austerity cause. What will it be next? Poodle breeders to cut the debt? Nascar racers?

At this rate, Peterson will soon join the club of people like Sheldon Adelson, the Koch brothers, and Karl Rove, who spent hundreds of billions of dollars and had just about zero influence for their trouble. Sometimes, money can't buy you love. Sometimes, it only buys poor judgment and makes you look faintly ridiculous.

The idea that recovery depended on austerity was always foolishness. Peterson's ploy was to make it a bipartisan cause, with Democrats agreeing to slit their own throats by agreeing with Republicans to cut Social Security and Medicare for the sake of reassuring the bond markets. But the bond markets are doing just fine, thanks to record low interest rates that turn out to have a lot more to do with Federal Reserve policy than with deficit projections. And President Obama has belatedly realized that the Peterson-Simpson-Bowles austerity axis doesn't exactly serve his political self-interest.

Meanwhile, it is dawning on Peterson's Republican Party allies that they are painted into a corner of their own creation. The Bush tax cuts expire January 1. If the Republicans hold out for tax cuts on the top two percent, they are responsible when taxes go up on everyone else -- and this time President Obama isn't blinking first.

Today, on Fox News, one of the Republican leaders, Sen. Bob Corker of Tennessee, went wobbly on taxes because he had a Eureka Moment. If Republicans agree to raise taxes on the richest, he said, that puts away the tax issue, and "all of a sudden, the [debate] goes back to entitlements and maybe it puts us in a place where we actually can do something that really saves the nation."

Uh, no it doesn't. Alas, the Republican version of entitlement reform is built on some really unpopular measures that don't even save much money, such as raising the Medicare eligibility age to 67, while Obama has moved away from the austerity kick.

Which is more popular and more sensible -- raising the Medicare eligibility age, or allowing Medicare to negotiate bulk discounts with drug companies? How does a truly unpopular Republican position translate into good politics? Look how quickly the Republicans dropped the Medicare voucher idea.

Obama's old position, echoing the line of the Peterson crusade, was that we needed to get \$4 trillion in deficit cuts over a decade. Now, however, Obama has sensibly recognized that the budget has already been cut by at least \$1.5 trillion by recent budget deals, most notably the very 2011 budget legislation that gave America the fiscal cliff.

That means far less deficit reduction, Obama is proposing to get most of it from tax increases on the wealthy. If Republicans stick with a larger deficit reduction number, that requires more unpopular cuts in Social Security and Medicare, and more "reform" of tax breaks that the middle class receives, such as the mortgage interest deduction. Uh-oh.

The fiscal cliff has had the opposite effect from the one that its too-clever sponsors intended. It has revealed the backward economic assumptions of the Peterson austerity crusade and the self-serving motives of its sponsors. And it has thrown into sharp relief the political unpopularity of Republican positions on taxes and on social insurance.

As Republicans try to walk back their position of no tax increases on anyone, any time (even billionaires, even if the result is cuts in Social Security and Medicare), watch for Republicans to turn on each other.

It's December. Maybe there is a Santa Claus.

20121207-01	09:27	GaryF	Re: Today's Lunch at Apple
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Those photos of the iFood lunches look pretty good. I wonder what the photos of ifood lunches at those Chinese "Apple" factories would look like?

20121207-03 11:13 SteveB Re: Today's Lunch at Apple (reply to GaryF, above)

Maybe like this:



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/huilin/241301114/>

20121207-04 11:22 GaryF Re: Today's Lunch at Apple (reply to SteveB, above)

Probably less protein and more white rice.

20121207-02 11:08 SteveB "Cat Parasite Toxoplasma Uses 'Trojan Horse' to Infect Human Brain & May Cause Suicidal Thoughts & Risk-Taking"

And you thought *The Mind Parasites* was a sci-fi fantasy...

"Cat Parasite Toxoplasma Uses 'Trojan Horse' to Infect Human Brain and May Cause Suicidal Thoughts and Risk-Taking" by Steve Connor, *The Independent*

Dec. 7, 2012, (<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/cat-parasite-toxoplasma-uses-trojan-horse-to-infect-human-brain-and-may-cause-suicidal-thoughts-and-risk-taking-8390165.html>)



(Toxoplasma able to pass from the gut into the central nervous system, says report.)

A food-borne parasite that infects domestic cats can get inside the human brain by commandeering special cells of the immune system which it uses as a Trojan horse to enter the central nervous system, a study has found.

Scientists believe they have finally discovered the mechanism that allows *Toxoplasma gondii* – a single-celled parasite – to pass from the human gut to the brain where it may cause behavioural changes.

Researchers have shown that the parasite can infect the dendritic white blood cells of the immune system causing them to secrete a chemical neurotransmitter that allows the infected cells, and the parasite, to cross the natural barrier protecting the brain.

Toxoplasma gondii can live in many different species but it can only complete its life cycle in cats, which secrete the parasite in their faeces. Studies have shown that toxoplasma affects the behaviour of rats and mice, making them more likely to be eaten by cats, thereby completing parasite's complex life-cycle.

Latest figures released in September by the Food Standards Agency show about 1,000 people a day in Britain – 350,000 a year – are being infected with toxoplasma, probably from either direct contact with cats or by eating poorly-cooked meat or vegetables.

Up to 40 per cent of the British population are believed to be infected with toxoplasma and although the vast majority show no apparent symptoms, there is a risk to unborn children if their mothers become infected for the first time during pregnancy.

However, recent studies have also suggested that toxoplasma may be a trigger for psychological disturbances in humans, including schizophrenia, although the research has fallen well short of showing a cause-and-effect.

Antonio Barragan of Sweden's Centre for Infectious Diseases at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm said that when infected with toxoplasma human dendritic cells, which are not part of the central nervous system, begin to secrete a neurotransmitter called GABA which is normally produced by brain cells.

"For toxoplasma to make cells in the immune defence to secrete GABA was as surprising as it was unexpected...This was unknown before. It means that the parasite had the capacity potentially to manipulate the central nervous system," Dr Barragan said.

The study, published in the on-line journal Plos Pathogens, used human dendritic cells growing in a test tube, but it also showed that infected dendritic cells pass more easily than uninfected cells into the brains of laboratory mice.

"We've shown that it happens in human dendritic cells taken from healthy donors and also proved that the same thing happens in the mouse model. It shows that the parasite is using dendritic cells as a sort of Trojan horse to transport itself from the human gut to the brain," Dr Barragan said.

"We've not looked at behaviour changes in people infected with toxoplasma, as that's been dealt with by previous studies. Instead, we've shown for the first time how the parasite behaves in the body of its host, by which I mean how it enters the brain and manipulates the host by taking over the brain's neurotransmitters," he said.

GABA, or gamma aminobutyric acid, is involved, among other things, in inhibiting the sense of fear and anxiety. Rats and mice infected with toxoplasma show little fear of cats and Dr Barragan suggested that infected dendritic cells may continue to stimulate the production of GABA once the cells have entered the brain.

However, other scientists have shown that toxoplasma is capable of producing another nerve substance called L-dopa which is a chemical precursor to the dopamine neurotransmitter, which may be another route to altering mammalian behaviour.

"Many neuropsychiatric disorders implicate a dysregulation of several neurotransmitters. If one is affected, this may affect the others, or the balance between neurotransmitters. How GABA specifically acts in the equation is a question for the future," Dr Barragan said.

Scientists emphasised that the jury is still out on whether toxoplasma is capable of influencing the behaviour or mental state of infected people given the preliminary nature of the studies showing a tentative link between the parasite and human behaviour.

"We believe that this knowledge may be important for the further understanding of complex interactions in some major public health issues that modern science still hasn't been able to explain fully," Dr Barragan said.

"At the same time, it's important to emphasise that humans have lived with this parasite for many millennia, so today's carriers of toxoplasma need not be particularly worried," he said.

[Still...if I have this crap in my brain, I'm gonna be worried! Don't hang-out with cats! -SteveB]

20121208-01 12:27 SteveB "James Taylor Calls for Election Reform"

Ah...the impossible "reasonable dialogue"... Sweet Baby James...

"James Taylor Calls for Election Reform" by Bryan Doyle, Politico

Dec. 7, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/blogs/click/2012/12/james-taylor-calls-for-election-reform-151419.html?hp=r16>)



(Jay Westcott/POLITICO)

James Taylor had election reform on his mind during a speech at the National Press Club on Friday.

"We have a day off for 4th of July. For Independence Day, Patriot's Day. Washington and Lincoln's birthday, Veteran's Day, we have MLK day. Why can't we get a day off to go to the polls?" the singer asked.

Taylor, wearing a cap and turtleneck, also called for polls to be open longer and criticized voter ID laws.

"There are a lot of people in the country...who want fewer people to vote," he said. "These voter ID laws that are in the name of preventing voter fraud, I think, it's a solution without a problem. ...It's just a bad idea in my opinion."

Discussing his political involvement in recent years, Taylor – who stumped for President Barack Obama's re-election – said he was "hugely motivated" by "eight years of Cheney-Bush."

"And I say it in that order on purpose," he said. "It was a tough time for me. I really suffered. It made me deeply ambivalent about my country. That we would choose that – even if we may not have actually chosen it – that that was what represented us in the world."

The Grammy winner added that while he's "a relentless Democrat," he believes that "a reasonable dialogue between Republicans and Democrats is what keeps this country on course and in balance."

"I think that by ourselves liberals would probably steer us to a sort of paralyzed nanny state, European style," he said. "And Republicans left to their own would head toward oligarchy of inherited wealth and power. So I think that we really do need a strong Republican Party and a good dialogue between left and right."

Besides talking politics, Taylor did some singing, too -- crooning classics like "Sweet Baby James" and "Something in the Way She Moves" for the crowd.

"Mmmm...I think I'll wear yellow today, for that tigerish look...quite stylish...but I look so good in black! What's a girl to do?"

"Venus the Two-Faced Cat a Mystery" by Katia Andreassi, *National Geographic*

Aug. 31, 2012, (<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2012/08/120831-venus-two-faced-cat-genetics-animals-science/>)



Venus's face is split evenly into two colors. (courtesy "Today Show"/NBC)

(Famous feline may have different DNA on each side of her body.)

Venus the two-faced cat is currently the most famous feline on the planet.

The three-year-old tortoiseshell has her own Facebook page and a YouTube video (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k38bfE3ubrs>) that's been viewed over a million times, and appeared on the "Today Show" last week.

One look at this cat and you can understand why: One half is solid black with a green eye—the other half has typical orange tabby stripes and a blue eye.

How does a cat end up looking like that? Leslie Lyons, a professor at the University of California, Davis, who studies the genetics of domestic cats said she's never seen a cat exactly like Venus.

"She is extremely, extremely rare," Lyons said. "But you can explain it and you can understand it."

Is Venus a Chimera?

Many reports about Venus refer to the cat as a "chimera." In mythology, a chimera is a mishmash monster made up of parts of different animals. A feline chimera is a cat whose cells contain two types of DNA, caused when two embryos fuse together.

Among cats, "chimeras are really not all that rare," Lyons said. In fact, most male tortoiseshell cats are chimeras. The distinctively mottled orange and black coat is a sign that the cat has an extra X chromosome.

But female cats, said Lyons, already have two X chromosomes so they can sport that coat without the extra X. That means Venus is not necessarily a chimera.

To find out would require genetic testing, said Lyons. With samples of skin from each side of the cat, "we can do a DNA fingerprint—just like on CSI—and the DNA from one side of the body should be different than the other."

Cat's Blue Eye Another Mystery

If Venus isn't actually a chimera, then what would explain her amazing face?

"Absolute luck," Lyons said. One theory: perhaps the black coloration was randomly activated in all the cells on one side of her face, while the orange coloration was activated on the other, and the two patches met at the midline of her body as she developed.

Cat fanciers who are transfixed by Venus's split face may be missing the real story: her single blue eye. Cat eyes are typically green or yellow, not blue.

A blue-eyed cat is typically a Siamese or else a cat with "a lot of white on them," she explained.

Venus appears to have only a white patch on her chest, which to Lyons is not enough to explain the blue eye.

"She is a bit of a mystery."

20121208-03 15:25 Marty Re: Mixed Breed? (reply to SteveB, above)

That is very cool. A symmetrical mosaic mutation. Most cats with different colored eyes are deaf. I wonder if this cat can hear?

I got an email from Larry. He still owns and rents some land around Cloverdale (I really don't yet know exactly where), but the young couple who lives there is interested in mushroom hunting. He gave me their phone number and talked to them about it. I'll give them a call.

Any morels in Bolivia?

I forgot to tell you in my last email, there was a blues/rock festival in Greencastle in the fall, and one jazz band played who had HarryM playing guitar. They had a good lead singer who also played trumpet, as well as an old piano player who is in the *Downbeat* Jazz Hall of Fame. Unfortunately, he had clearly seen better days (the piano player).

20121208-04 19:10 SteveB Re: Mixed Breed? (reply to Marty, above)

So is that what a cat (or any animal, I guess) is if they have different colored eyes? Are they also "symmetrical mosaic mutations"? In which case, I guess it's logical this cat would have different colored eyes.

I wonder why the deafness? Maybe something about nerve connections???

No morels in Bolivia, apparently, but lots of mind-altering plants and mushrooms I'd be very scared of. There are true *brujos* here, who, using such substances, can teach people to fly...at least in their minds... We consider ourselves lucky to now have a regular supply of fresh button mushrooms and portobellos in the supermarkets.

I'll tell Harry on Facebook that you saw him. Happy to hear the good news about my old bandmate.

20121208-05	20:50	SteveG	Fw: SignOn.org Petition: Demand Fair Compensation for Members of Congress!
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from SignOn.org:

Fair Compensation, by Claudia Lewis

To be delivered to: The United States House of Representatives and The United States Senate

Petition Statement

"Our senators and representatives no longer represent the average working American. Their compensation needs to be tied to the average workers salary, with no medical benefits, retirement income or more than 2 weeks vacation, so they might better represent us."

Petition Background

Our senators and representatives no longer represent the average working American. They have lost touch with the problems faced by working Americans. They recess while they should be working on solving the many budget and health issues that face our country. It's time they faced the problems of middle class Americans. Cut their salary and benefits back to the level of the working class. Maybe then we will have representation.

<http://signon.org/sign/fair-compensation.fb23>

20121209-02	06:05	SteveB	"Ann Coulter Attacks Latinos in Column, As Conservatives Seek to Reach-Out to Hispanic Voters" & "America Nears El Tipping Pointo"
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"Ann Coulter Attacks Latinos in Column, As Conservatives Seek to Reach-Out to Hispanic Voters" by Roque Planas, Huffington Post

Dec. 7, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/12/07/ann-coulter-attacks-latinos-conservatives-hispanic-voters_n_2253721.html?utm_hp_ref=politics&ir=Politics)

Republicans looking to reach out to Latinos may want to avoid the advice of Ann Coulter.

The conservative pundit penned a column Wednesday in which she lashed out at the "deluge of unskilled immigrants pouring into the country" and portrayed Latinos as a lazy "underclass" looking for a government handout. Coulter titles the piece "America Nears El Tipping Pointo," presumably to make a virtue of her ignorance of the Spanish language.

In fact, Latinos use less than their fair share of government benefits. According to a study released this year by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities:

Non-Hispanic whites accounted for 64 percent of the population in 2010 and received 69 percent of the entitlement benefits. In contrast, Hispanics made up 16 percent of the population but received 12 percent of the benefits, less than their proportionate share -- likely because they are a younger population and also because immigrants, including many legal immigrants, are ineligible for various benefits.

Coulter implies in her piece that non-whites are "nitwits who deserve lives of misery and joblessness." She singles out immigrants from Latin America as particularly "nitwitty," saying they have too many babies out of wedlock, without citing a published source for the assertion. Nearly half of undocumented-immigrant households -- 45 percent -- consisted of a spouse or cohabiting couple with one or more children, compared to 34 percent of legal immigrants and 21 percent of the U.S. born, according to a 2010 Pew Hispanic Study.

Apparently unaware that Latinos do not depend disproportionately on government benefits, Coulter writes:

That's a lot of government dependents coming down the pike. No amount of "reaching out" to the Hispanic community, effective "messaging" or Reagan's "optimism" is going to turn Mexico's underclass into Republicans ... Rather than being more hardworking than American, Hispanics actually work about the same as others, or, in the case of Hispanic women, less.

In fact, Latinos -- especially immigrants -- are more entrepreneurial than the general population. As Cristina Costantini points out in a piece for ABC/Univision, Hispanics created twice as many businesses as the general public since 2000, according to census data.

Mitt Romney won just 27 percent of the Latino vote, the lowest number of a presidential candidate since Bob Dole in 1996. Romney's failure to attract Hispanic voters likely owes to the hardline positions on immigration he took to attract the GOP's right wing, many of whom viewed the former Massachusetts governor as too liberal going into the party primary.

"America Nears El Tipping Pointo" by Ann Coulter, various

Dec. 5, 2012, (<http://www.anncoulter.com/columns/2012-12-05.html>)

I apologize to America's young people, whose dashed dreams and dim employment prospects I had laughed at, believing these to be a direct result of their voting for Obama.

On closer examination, it turns out that young voters, aged 18-29, overwhelmingly supported Romney. But only the white ones.

According to Pew Research, 54 percent of white voters under 30 voted for Romney and only 41 percent for Obama. That's the same percentage Reagan got from the entire white population in 1980. Even the Lena Dunham demographic -- white women under 30 -- slightly favored Romney.

Reagan got just 43 percent of young voters in 1980 -- and that was when whites were 88 percent of the electorate. Only 58 percent of today's under-30 vote is white and it's shrinking daily.

What the youth vote shows is not that young people are nitwits who deserve lives of misery and joblessness, as I had previously believed, but that America is hitting the tipping point on our immigration policy.

The youth vote is a snapshot of elections to come if nothing is done to reverse the deluge of unskilled immigrants pouring into the country as a result of Ted Kennedy's 1965 immigration act. Eighty-five percent of legal immigrants since 1968 have come from the Third World. A majority of them are in need of government assistance.

Whites are 76 percent of the electorate over the age of 30 and only 58 percent of the electorate under 30. Obama won the "youth vote" because it is the knife's edge of a demographic shift, not because he offered the kids free tuition and contraception (which they don't need because it's hard to have sex when you're living with your parents at 27).

In 1980, Hispanics were only 2 percent of the population, and they tended to be educated, skilled workers who got married, raised their children in two-parent families and sent their kids to college before they, too, got married and had kids. (In that order.)

That profile has nothing to do with recent Hispanic immigrants, who -- because of phony "family reunification" rules -- are the poorest of the world's poor.

More than half of all babies born to Hispanic women today are illegitimate. As Heather MacDonald has shown, the birthrate of Hispanic women is twice that of the rest of the population, and their unwed birthrate is one and a half times that of blacks.

That's a lot of government dependents coming down the pike. No amount of "reaching out" to the Hispanic community, effective "messaging" or Reagan's "optimism" is going to turn Mexico's underclass into Republicans.

Any election analysis that doesn't deal with the implacable fact of America's changing demographics is bound to be wrong.

Perhaps the reason elections maven Michael Barone was so shockingly off in his election prediction this year was that, in the biggest mistake of his career, Barone has been assuring us for years that most of these Third World immigrants pouring into the country would go the way of Italian immigrants and become Republicans. They're hardworking! They have family values!

Maybe at first, but not after coming here, having illegitimate children and going on welfare.

Charles Murray recently pointed out that -- contrary to stereotype -- Hispanics are less likely to be married, less likely to go to church, more supportive of gay marriage and less likely to call themselves "conservative" than other Americans.

Rather than being more hardworking than Americans, Hispanics actually work about the same as others, or, in the case of Hispanic women, less.

It seems otherwise, Murray says, because the only Hispanics we see are the ones who are working -- in our homes, neighborhoods and businesses. "That's the way that almost all Anglos in the political chattering class come in contact with Latinos," he notes. "Of course they look like model Americans."

(Black males would apparently like to work more. Nearly 20 percent of black males under 30 voted for Romney, more than three times what McCain got.)

An article by Nate Cohn in the current *New Republic* argues, as the title puts it: "The GOP Has Problems with White Voters, Too." As proof, Cohn cites Jefferson County, Colo.; Loudoun County, Va.; Wake County, N.C.; and Somerset County, N.J., all of which went Republican in presidential elections from 1968 through 2004, but which Romney lost in 2012.

Smelling a rat, I checked the demographic shifts in these counties from the 2000 to the 2010 census. In each one, there has been a noticeable influx of Hispanics (and Asians, who also vote Democrat), diminishing "the white vote" that Cohn claims Republicans are losing.

Between the 2000 and 2010 census, for example, the white population of Jefferson County declined from more than 90 percent to less than 80 percent, while the Hispanic population more than doubled, from 6 percent to 14 percent.

In Loudoun County, the Asian population tripled from 5 percent to 15 percent and the Hispanic population doubled from 6 percent to 12 percent. Meanwhile, whites plummeted from 83 percent to 69 percent of the population.

Similarly, Wake County shifted from 74 percent white to 66 percent white in the past decade, while the Hispanic population doubled, from 5 percent to 10 percent, and the black population stayed even at about 20 percent.

In Somerset County, the Hispanic population grew by 63 percent and the Asian population grew by 83 percent since 2000. The number of whites has remained steady, resulting in a population that is now just 62 percent white.

These were the counties chosen by Cohn, not me, to show that Republicans are losing "the white vote." Except they're not so white, anymore. With blacks, Asians and Hispanics voting 93 percent, 73 percent and 71 percent for Obama, Republicans have to do more than just win the white vote. They have to run the table.

Romney got a larger percentage of the white vote than Reagan did in 1980. That's just not enough anymore.

Ironically, Romney was the first Republican presidential candidate in a long time not conspiring with the elites to make America a dumping ground for the world's welfare cases. Conservatives who denounced Romney as a "RINO" were the ones doing the bidding of the real establishment: business, which wants cheap labor and couldn't care less if America ceases to be the land of opportunity that everyone wanted to immigrate to in the first place.

[20121209-03](#) 11:50 Tom Photo: Go Out & Enjoy Nature #1



[20121209-04](#) 18:43 SteveB "How the Mainstream Press Bungled the Single Biggest Story of the 2012 Campaign"

Interesting analysis of the reporting of Republican lies...

"How the Mainstream Press Bungled the Single Biggest Story of the 2012 Campaign" by Dan Froomkin, Huffington Post

Dec. 7, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dan-froomkin/republican-lies-2012-election_b_2258586.html?utm_hp_ref=politics&ir=Politics)

Post-mortems of contemporary election coverage typically include regrets about horserace journalism, he-said-she-said stenography, and the lack of enlightening stories about the issues.

But according to longtime political observers Thomas Mann and Norman Ornstein, campaign coverage in 2012 was a particularly calamitous failure, almost entirely missing the single biggest story of the race: Namely, the radical right-wing, off-the-rails lurch of the Republican Party, both in terms of its agenda and its relationship to the truth.

Mann and Ornstein are two longtime centrist Washington fixtures who earlier this year dramatically rejected the strictures of false equivalency that bind so much of the capital's media elite and publicly concluded that GOP leaders have become "ideologically extreme; scornful of compromise; unmoved by conventional understanding of facts, evidence and science; and dismissive of the legitimacy of its political opposition."

The 2012 campaign further proved their point, they both said in recent interviews. It also exposed how fabulists and liars can exploit the elite media's fear of being seen as taking sides.

"The mainstream press really has such a difficult time trying to cope with asymmetry between the two parties' agendas and connections to facts and truth," said Mann, who has spent nearly three decades as a congressional scholar at the centrist Brookings Institution.

"I saw some journalists struggling to avoid the trap of balance and I knew they were struggling with it -- and with their editors," said Mann. "But in general, I think overall it was a pretty disappointing performance."

"I can't recall a campaign where I've seen more lying going on -- and it wasn't symmetric," said Ornstein, a scholar at the conservative American Enterprise Institute who's been tracking Congress with Mann since 1978. Democrats were hardly innocent, he said, "but it seemed pretty clear to me that the Republican campaign was just far more over the top."

Lies from Republicans generally and standardbearer Mitt Romney in particular weren't limited to the occasional TV ads, either; the party's most central campaign principles -- that federal spending doesn't create jobs, that reducing taxes on the rich could create jobs and lower the deficit -- willfully disregarded the truth.

"It's the great unreported big story of American politics," Ornstein said.

"If voters are going to be able to hold accountable political figures, they've got to know what's going on," Ornstein said. "And if the story that you're telling repeatedly is that they're all to blame -- they're all equally to blame -- then you're really doing a disservice to voters, and not doing what journalism is supposed to do."

Ornstein said the media's failure led him to conclude: "If you want to use a strategy of 'I'm just going to lie all the time', when you have the false equivalence meme adopted by a mainstream press and the other side lies a quarter of the time, you get away with it."

The Apostasy

Ornstein and Mann's big coming out took place in late April, when the *Washington Post's* "Outlook" section published their essay "Admit It. The Republicans Are Worse", adapted from their book *It's Even Worse Than It Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided With the New Politics of Extremism*, which went on sale a few days later.

Political journalists had no doubt heard similar arguments many times before, mostly from left wing bloggers. But this time the charge was coming from two of the most consistent purveyors of conventional wisdom in town, bipartisan to a fault.

And they were pretty harsh in their critique of the media. "Our advice to the press: Don't seek professional safety through the even-handed, unfiltered presentation of opposing views," they wrote in the Post. "Which politician is telling the truth? Who is taking hostages, at what risks and to what ends?"

Initially, at least, Mann and Ornstein weren't completely ignored. "We had really good reporters call us and say: 'You're absolutely right'," Mann said. "They told us they used this as the basis for conversations in the newsroom."

But those conversations went nowhere, Mann said.

"Their editors and producers, who felt they were looking out for the economic wellbeing of their news organizations, were also concerned about their professional standing and vulnerability to charges of partisan bias," Mann said.

So most reporters just kept on with business as usual.

"They're so timid," Mann said.

Some reporters did better than others, Ornstein said, particularly crediting Jackie Calmes of the *New York Times* and David Rogers of Politico among a few others. "They grew a little bit more straightforward in what they do, and showed you can be a good, diligent unbiased reporter, report the facts, put it in context, and yet show what's really going on," he said.

Most reporters, however -- including many widely admired for their intelligence and aggressive reporting -- simply refused to blame one side more than the other. Mann said he was struck in conversations with journalists by how influenced they were by the heavily funded movement to promote a bipartisan consensus around deficit reduction and austerity. Such a bipartisan consensus doesn't actually exist, Mann pointed out. But if you believe it does, then you can blame both parties for failing to reach it.

"The Peterson world, I think, has given journalists the material to keep doing what they're doing," Mann said of the vast network of think tanks and other influential Washington groups underwritten at least in part by Wall Street billionaire Peter Peterson.

Peterson's vast spending has given rise to an environment of contempt among the Washington elites for anyone who doesn't believe the government is dangerously overextended. And by that reckoning, the Democrats are therefore more out of touch with reality than Republicans, who at least pay the concept ample lip service.

How Fact-Checking Made Things Worse

Ornstein and Mann's views on journalistic failure have not been widely shared by mainstream media critics, who have instead focused on the fact that the press, in its enthusiasm to see the presidential race decided by a nose, ignored solid polling data to the contrary and called it wrong until the very end.

To the extent that the issue of widespread prevarication has come up at all, many media critics identified the rise of fact-checking as the big new trend of the 2012 cycle.

But Mann and Ornstein said that in practice, the fact-checkers may have made things worse rather than better.

"We had these little flurries of fact-checking -- which I found not worthless, but not a substitute for coherent, serious reporting -- and most of the time it just got stuck in the back of a news organization's output and there was no cost to a candidate of ignoring it," Mann said.

And then there was this terrible irony: "Fact checkers almost seemed obliged to show some balance in their fact checking."

"There was some damn good stuff done, and stuff that really did hold Romney to account," Ornstein said. But no fact-checker intent on "appearing to be utterly straightforward, independent, and without an axe to grind, is going to actually do the job of saying that we're going to cover 20 fact checks on one side, to three on the other."

So, Ornstein concluded: "If you looked at where the scales should have been, and where they were, they were weighted. And they weren't weighted for ideological bias. They were weighted to avoid being charged with ideological bias."

It's hard to exaggerate just how popular Mann and Ornstein were with the press before their apostasy. They were quite possibly the two most quotable men in Washington. They were the media cocktail party circuit's most reliable walking talking points.

And now they are virtual pariahs.

"It's awkward. I can no longer be a source in a news story in the *Wall Street Journal* or the *Times* or the *Post* because people now think I've made the case for the Democrats and therefore I'll have to be balanced with a Republican," Mann said.

Neither Mann nor Ornstein have been guests on any of the main Sunday public affairs shows since their book came out. Nor has anyone else on those shows talked about the concerns they raised.

Ornstein is particularly infuriated that none of the supposed reader advocates at major newspapers have raised the issues they brought up. "What the fuck is an ombudsman doing if he's not writing about this?" he asked.

Their phones are still ringing, they say -- but not from inside the Beltway. "We've gotten a tremendous amount of attention, but much of that is due to the Internet and our original piece going viral," Mann said. They were also featured on NPR.

There have been countless requests for speaking engagements. "We're just selling a shitload of books," said Mann. "There've been page-one stories in countries around the world."

Domestically, however, Mann and Ornstein said they refuse to be "balanced" on TV shows by Republicans -- because they are not anti Republican. The reason they wanted the press to expose what was really happening, they said, was to give voters a chance to respond in an appropriate way.

"The argument we're making is that our politics will never really get better until the Republican Party gets back into the game, instead of playing a new one," Mann said. "We want a strong, conservative Republican Party -- but one with some connection with reality."

Their critique came not out of ideology, they said, but out of their background as devoted process junkies and honest analysts, who finally realized that their vision of collegial governance wasn't possible any more, and it was clear why.

Both see the rise of Tea Party influence on the GOP as a major turning point. For Mann, the moment of reckoning came in the summer of 2011. "What flipped me over was the debt ceiling hostage-taking," Mann said. It was clear then that the Republicans would "do or say anything" to hurt Obama, even if it was overtly bad for the country and false to core Republican values.

"That and getting older. What do I give a shit about access," he said.

"The fact is that one of the parties stopped being a conventional conservative party," Mann said. "My own view is that what needed to happen is somehow the public had to take a two-by-four to the Republicans' heads, knock them back to their senses, and allow conservative pragmatic voices to emerge," he said.

Democrats won soundly in 2012 of course, so the two-by-four was administered. But because the media obfuscated what was going on, the message was not entirely clear -- and certainly not to the Republican leadership.

Their Message Going Forward

Mann and Ornstein don't get invited to talk to the leaders of news organizations anymore.

But if they were, again, here is what Mann would say: "First of all, I'd sympathize. I'd say I understand that you have the responsibility to use professional norms of accuracy and fairness and not let your own personal feelings get in the way."

But, he would add: "You all have missed an incredibly important story in our politics that's been developing over a period of time. You'll slip it in here and there, you'll bury it, but you really don't confront it."

Ornstein said his message would be this:

I understand your concerns about advertisers. I understand your concerns about being labeled as biased. But what are you there for? What's the whole notion of a free press for if you're not going to report without fear or favor and you're not going to report what your reporters, after doing their due diligence, see as the truth?

And if you don't do that, then you can expect I think a growing drumbeat of criticism that you're failing in your fundamental responsibility.

Your job is to report the truth. And sometimes there are two sides to a story. Sometimes there are ten sides to a story. Sometimes there's only one.

Somebody has got to make an assessment of whether the two sides are being equally careless with their facts, or equally deliberate with their lies.

20121209-05	19:29	MarthaH	"What James Madison Would Tell Grover Norquist"
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"What James Madison Would Tell Grover Norquist" by Stephen Prothero, *USA Today*

Dec. 9, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2012/12/09/grover-norquist-tax-pledge-james-madison/1757029/>)

(Founders didn't want yes men, they want representatives of the people.)

American politics has a pledge problem, and Grover Norquist isn't the only offender. In addition to Norquist's anti-tax increase pledge, there is the liberal Contract for the American Dream of MoveOn.org, plus a host of additional pledges for and against both abortion rights and and gay marriage.

Is all this pledging a good idea? No, said James Madison, and the Founding Fathers agreed.

In England and the British colonies, representatives routinely received "instructions" from citizens that bound them to vote for or against certain measures.

This practice did not go unchallenged. In 1766, Massachusetts Lt. Gov. Thomas Hutchinson argued strenuously against the rights of Massachusetts towns to "instruct" their representatives: "To hold each representative to vote according to the opinion of his town ... contradicts the very idea of a parliament the members whereof are supposed to debate and argue in order to convince and be convinced."

Nonetheless, under the Articles of Confederation, which governed U.S. politics in the aftermath of the Revolution, states reserved the right to recall their "delegates" (as they called them) if they did not vote as they were told.

This political tradition was rejected by the Founding Fathers, who did not include in the U.S. Constitution either a "right to instruct" or a "right to recall" disobedient legislators. When a representative to the First Congress from South Carolina introduced a constitutional amendment affirming a binding "right to instruct," it was soundly defeated in both houses.

A check on powers?

Defenders of instructions saw this tradition as an affirmation of popular sovereignty and a much-needed check on representative power. But Madison, an author of the Federalist Papers and the principal architect of the

Constitution, disagreed. Representative power is checked by frequent elections, he argued. Any instructions states might offer to their federal representatives should be seen as merely advisory. "That instructions are binding on the representatives," he concluded "is of a doubtful, if not of a dangerous, nature."

So what does all this have to do with the current mania for pledges and the rapidly approaching "fiscal cliff"?

Colonial and early national instructions are admittedly different from modern-day pledges. A pledge is a straitjacket a candidate puts on himself while an instruction is a straitjacket that citizens put on their representatives. Nonetheless, the lessons learned in our early experiments with republican government still apply.

In our founding debates about instructions, we decided we did not want a government in which "delegates" were sent to the Capitol simply to do the bidding of others. We wanted House and Senate members to represent the interests of the nation, not just those of their states or districts. And we wanted our representatives to deliberate with one another, "to convince and be convinced," and to compromise in order to get things done.

Delicate balance upset

All this is to say that our early republic struck a balance between popular sovereignty and what Madison called "a due sense of national character." Pledges disrupt this delicate balance, turning "representatives" into "delegates" who take their marching orders from Grover Norquist or MoveOn.org.

According to Christopher Terranova, author of an exhaustive law review article on the history of legislative "instructions," even the conservative icon Edmund Burke disobeyed instructions sent to him by his constituents when he in his judgment saw fit.

Conservatives today need to follow Burke's example, and the examples of Sen. Saxby Chambliss, R-Ga., Rep. Peter King, R-N.Y., and others who have indicated that they will disregard their anti-tax increase pledges if the good of the country demands it.

Back in 1789, Madison posed this rhetorical question on the House floor: Suppose a representative "is instructed to patronize certain measures, and...he is convinced that they will endanger the public good; is he obliged to sacrifice his own judgment to them?"

His answer was, of course, no.



http://www.trekearth.com/gallery/South_America/Bolivia/North/Beni/JUNGLE/photo513440.htm



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Steven W. Baker (SteveB), Editor/Moderator

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