

# Slate.com

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## ad report card

### Jingle Hell

The diabolical geniuses behind Subway's "five-dollar foot-long" song.

By Seth Stevenson

Monday, April 21, 2008, at 7:21 AM ET

The Spot: *Various people and creatures (a police officer, a flight attendant, a Godzilla-type monster) hold up five fingers and then, using their outstretched palms, indicate a distance of roughly one foot. Meanwhile, a song plays. The lyrics, repeated again and again: "Five. Five dollar. Five dollar foot-long."*

For a limited time, Subway is offering a special deal: foot-long subs for \$5. Foot-longs were once Subway's "stock in trade," according to Chief Marketing Officer Tony Pace, but in recent years the smaller 6-inch subs have overtaken them in popularity. (The 6-inchers are often sold as part of a package deal—including a drink and a snack—designed to compete with other fast food outlets' value meals.) "We wanted to get back to our heritage," says Pace, "as a place where you can get a foot-long sub."

How to convey this vital information to the public at large? To ad agency MMB, the advent of a \$5 foot-long seemed in itself momentous and compelling enough that elaborate persuasive efforts could only cloud the issue. The key was to be as straightforward as possible. So the team devised a simple hand gesture to symbolize the \$5 price and the ample length of the sandwich. This semaphore had a pleasing parsimony. But it still required some explanatory copy.

"We didn't want any blabbing," say Jerry Cronin and Jamie Mambro of MMB. "It was just, let's see how many times we can say 'five dollar foot-long.' Let's mention it as many times as possible without making someone hurt us. We wanted to make sure no one would miss the message." They quickly realized the best way to accomplish that goal (barring an embrace of the controversial "[HeadOn: Apply directly to the forehead](#)" method) was to embed the phrase in a jingle.

The resultant, maddeningly catchy ditty has spawned, among other responses, a YouTube [horror-parody video titled "\\$5 Curse."](#) in which a man goes slowly insane as he attempts to dislodge the tune from his skull. Comments posted by viewers of this video include: "I have this exact same problem. Thank you for making this video!"; "LOL. yes!! dude. this is me in my apartment"; and "I, too, am a victim of the \$5 curse. My daughter and I were singing it together with the harmonies while doing the dishes after dinner tonight."

I think the song's genius (I myself have been known to hum along) lies in its blending of stubborn repetition with a haunting and imploring chord progression. It's a far cry from the pat, upbeat vibe of your standard jingle, and it's this unexpected quality that perks up our ears and sticks in our minds. I called the composer, Jimmy Harned (of the boutique music outfit Tonefarmer), to see whether he might confirm my notion that there's something ominous going on in his work.

"The chord structure does imply something dark," he agreed, getting out his guitar to demonstrate over the phone. "On the word *long*, it goes down from a C to an A-flat," he said, strumming, "which is kind of a weird place. It's definitely not a poppy, happy place. It's more of a metaly place. But at the same time, the singing stays almost saccharine."

(I didn't get the sense that there'd been a conscious strategy at work here. Tonefarmer's songwriters whipped up seven or eight jingle candidates for Subway—including a Weezer sound-alike and a ska-inflected number—with the hope that one tune would be chosen and, in a best-case scenario, develop into an [earworm](#). Harned paused to self-analyze only after the fact, when I requested that he look more closely at what he'd wrought.)

More and more, ad agencies don't bother to commission songs; they instead just buy up cool indie tracks to run behind ads. (A recent example—and an ad I love: the [Nike Sparq spot](#) in which

footage of athletes is expertly edited to a Saul Williams track.) When original music does come into play, it's often instrumental, mood-setting wallpaper. The in-your-face jingle, with product-specific lyrics, is something of a lost art.

But take heart, jingle fans—they're still out there. [Dunkin' Donuts hired They Might Be Giants](#) to pen a series of short songs about coffee and smoothies and such. And the current campaign for FreeCreditReport.com makes bold use of [infectious musical storytelling](#). While the Subway jingle is more a demi-jingle, with very little build and no verses, the FreeCreditReport.com songs are full-blown ballads—which of course include carefully enunciated mentions of the brand, in this case literally spelled out. The songwriter for these spots was David Muhlenfeld of the Martin Agency, who says he "went away with my guitar and some cheap Chianti" to find inspiration. When I asked Muhlenfeld whether he used any particular tricks to make the tunes catchy, he replied: "Repetition alone will make something stick in a listener's head. The question is, once your song is in their head, will they want to stick that head in an oven?"

And that pretty much captures the risk inherent in jingle usage. It also perhaps explains why jingles enjoy limited popularity with today's advertising execs. When a jingle's bad, it's *very* bad. Or as Cronin and Mambro put it: "Done wrong, it can make your eyes bleed."

Grade: B. No great shakes here, but anyone watching the ad will 1) probably be arrested by the colorful visuals and memorable tune and 2) almost certainly receive the message that \$5 foot-longs are available at Subway. So, mission accomplished. Granted, the song does grow irritating with repeat exposures. (I won't be sad when it disappears from the airwaves, and I won't be listening to the extended dance remix available for download at the [Subway Web site](#).) But thanks to its atypical harmonies, I think this jingle manages to stop just shy of encroaching on eye-bleeding, head-in-oven territory.

*Got an ad you'd like to see reviewed? E-mail your suggestions to [adreportcard@slate.com](mailto:adreportcard@slate.com).*

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## Advanced Search

Friday, October 19, 2001, at 6:39 PM ET

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## architecture

### If You Build It

Two visions of the ideal city rise in the Persian Gulf.

By Witold Rybczynski

Thursday, April 24, 2008, at 6:54 AM ET

*Click [here](#) to read a slide-show essay on building cities from scratch.*

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## books

### Cartoons Go to War

Bill Mauldin's unflinching vision has yet to be beat.

By Ben Yagoda

Friday, April 25, 2008, at 7:07 AM ET

*Click [here](#) to read a slide-show essay on Bill Mauldin's one-of-a-kind war cartoons.*

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## books

### Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, Who's the Cleverest of Them All?

Keith Gessen's great adventure.

By Judith Shulevitz

Monday, April 21, 2008, at 7:22 AM ET

Every generation has its clever young men, and Keith Gessen must be counted among them in his. Three years ago he co-founded *n+1*, a clever yet chasteningly serious little magazine that offers thoughtful articles about such things as the history of the office cubicle and gravely assesses "the intellectual situation" in every issue. Now Gessen has published his first novel, [All the](#)

*Sad Young Literary Men*, and it is as clever and self-consciously important and intermittently brilliant as his magazine.

*All the Sad Young Literary Men* traces the careers of three would-be public intellectuals from their undergraduate or immediately postgraduate years to their early 30s. Self-pitying, self-obsessed, and itchy for recognition, these young men fall in and out of love with the same handful of women, though they themselves are barely acquainted. They shed their outsized ambitions. They acquire new ones. They fail. They become wiser, if not necessarily kinder. Two of them fail spectacularly, defeated by grandiosity, distractability, and the availability of technologies of communication. Sam Mitnick gets a small advance to write the great Zionist epic, though he speaks no Hebrew and has never visited Israel. He spends his days worrying about girlfriends and checking e-mail and falls apart entirely when he discovers that "his Google" (the number of mentions of his name) has gone from the mid-300s to 22. Mark Grossman, stuck in a graduate program in history in Syracuse, dithers over a dissertation on the Mensheviks, dissects his unsatisfying sex life, and struggles to identify the exact device required by a man afraid to miss the phone call of a woman seemingly destined never to call.

The third young man claims to have failed but has, in fact, succeeded. The novel is proof of that. This character is named Keith Gessen, and he is the only one of the three who gets to tell his story in the first person. He is also, in that now-familiar novelistic hat trick, a creation whose identity mirrors his creator's in most (though not all) particulars. Like Gessen the author, Keith is the son of overeducated Russian Jewish immigrants, a graduate of Harvard, a resident of Brooklyn, a writer of acclaimed commentary, the brother of a female journalist who has moved back to Russia. Keith likes to regale us with his inadequacies but has a surreptitious flair for survival. At college he toys with, but never quite succumbs to, the two great temptations of college life: drinking too much beer and becoming a Hegel-spouting loser. After Harvard, he gets right down to business, publishing liberal punditry in magazines like the *New American* and *Debate* (recognizably the *New Republic* and *Dissent*).

Gessen here revisits the world first explored by Claire Messud in her 2006 novel, *The Emperor's Children*—that of aspirational intellectuals in the late 1990s and early oughts. Whereas Messud prefers Manhattan dinner parties, Gessen reports from student ghettos and the outer boroughs. His characters, though, are hardly outsiders. One of the pleasures of Gessen's novel is how well he reproduces the speech patterns of brainy, left-wing Ivy Leaguers—their sardonic deployment of social-theoretical jargon, their riffs on technology and capitalism, their anxiety about status, and the pride in small failures meant to refute their guilty sense of privilege.

The summer after sophomore year, for example, Keith Gessen discovers that all his friends "were going off to make connections and fetch coffee at NASA and the NASDAQ," while he has made no plans at all. He is forced to go home and get a job moving furniture. He recovers from the setback by confecting cunning paragraphs about his temporary proletarianization: "I abetted gentrification, such as it was; the invisible hand of the market, redistributing the choicest properties as they became more choice and pushing those who couldn't hack it to the peripheries, was actually my hand, my two strong hands, carrying the antique armchairs of the upwardly mobile and the heavy fold-out couches of those who were falling behind."

Marginally less pleasurable, but not unenjoyable, is the work the novel forces us to do of separating Keith the character, with his self-congratulatory self-deprecation, from Gessen the author. The difficulty of this exercise explains, in part, both the novel's comic bite and its faintly bitter aftertaste. Keith charms us with his candor but puts us off with his disturbingly authentic sense of superiority. We chuckle with Keith, but we wonder about Gessen: Are we supposed to laugh with him or gloat with him? At one point Keith admits to having become a regular at the kind of party he first attended in the company of a furious denouncer of phonies named Morris Binkel (identifiable as *New Republic* senior editor Lee Siegel, a ranter of similar proportions). There he finds women who look at him hungrily, calculatingly, "because like Morris I had won a place among them, among them and above them, and because I had made a mess of my life in the way that Morris, in his time, had made a mess of his." Gessen is a writer who makes fun of others convincingly and himself less convincingly. For the epigraph of a novel in which his namesake's acquaintances come off as ridiculous, if endearing, Gessen originally wrote, "To my friends, with apologies." Then he must have realized how that sounded, because he crossed it out. (The epigraph appears, a line drawn through it, in the uncorrected proofs I was sent for review. I have no business mentioning it. But I thought readers might like to know.)

Don't let the smug undertone alienate you overmuch, though. Gessen earns it, more or less. He is, in fact, a very good satirist. He skewers with glee, like a latter-day Mary McCarthy. He knows things about today's young male literary journalists that the rest of us suspect but lack the means to confirm. He knows how overconfident they are and how easily overcome with self-disgust. He knows that they're starving to be told that they *matter* and must tamp down the certainty that they don't. He knows that they're ferociously career-minded, and terrified of being labeled as such. That Harvardian conviction that one's every utterance partakes of genius? He grasps that it is more likely to be a trait of men, or at least he does not attribute it to the book's women. (We don't occupy the point of view of any female character, which further suggests that he understands his limitations.) Best of all, he knows how his generation riffs. His

book is filled with the sort of high nonsense you find in *n+1*, happily stripped of earnestness. Consider Mark on dating, which,

Mark knew from watching television, was the prime historical movement of his time: it was the biggest industry, the most potent narrative device. It was bigger than sex, bigger than pornography. *Dating*, builder of cities. And Mark, of course, wanted to be current, wanted to be historical, to participate in the truth regime as it was now constituted: to date, in other words, with maximum anonymity, without the safety nets of parental and social networks, potluck dinners, and work parties. It was the only way to find out, for sure, who Mark was.

Keith's brush with history is only slightly less absurd than Mark's. It occurs at the beginning of the novel. Ferdinand, his debauched college roommate, starts bringing Al Gore's daughter Lauren back to their room. (The timing—this takes place in the mid-1990s—suggests that she stands in for Karenna.) Keith, the suite nerd, flirts with her, has a heart-to-heart with her, dreams of stealing her away from his unworthy friend. He does not. Years later, after the disastrous election of 2000, he runs into daughter and father on Madison Avenue. "She looked happy, flushed, a walking advertisement for our civilization, while her father wore his beard, his infamous beard," he writes. "I wanted to say to Lauren, 'I'm sorry,' though she didn't look like she needed it, and 'I wish you were President,' to her father, who looked like he did." Gore, however, flinches, and father and daughter rush off.

It helps to know, in deciphering this scene, that Gore is the patron saint of *n+1*, the Trotsky of Gessen and his post-neoliberal crew. Gore and his beard and his nonpresidency and his thoughts on environmental catastrophe haunt both magazine and novel, reminding us of what could have been and what might be again. By the end of the novel, after Keith has come back from several years in Moscow—"I had grown stronger, my vision was wider, and I saw more clearly than my contemporaries"—and experienced a small personal crisis that some might consider a tragedy and some a blessing, he figures out a whole new way to matter, one that, it would be nice to think, Gore would approve of. "A cabal of liars and hypocrites had stolen the White House, launched a criminal war, bankrupted our treasury and authorized torture in our prisons," he writes. "And now it was too late—but also, you know, not too late."

I won't tell you what Keith thinks will save him and maybe the rest of the America, too, but I will say that as a woman who has been on the other side of the solution he proposes, I don't think it will. (I'm not sure Gessen does, either.) However, it's nice to know that the young people (as my 82-year-old father-in-law

calls them) still await their glory. It's their perquisite, and also their job.

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## bushisms

### Bushism of the Day

By Jacob Weisberg

Wednesday, April 23, 2008, at 11:10 AM ET

"Oftentimes people ask me, 'Why is it that you're so focused on helping the hungry and diseased in strange parts of the world?' "  
"—Washington, D.C., April 18, 2008

Click [here](#) to see video of Bush's comments. The Bushism is at 12:21.

Got a Bushism? Send it to [bushisms@slate.com](mailto:bushisms@slate.com). For more, see "[The Complete Bushisms](#)."

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## bushisms

### Bushism of the Day

By Jacob Weisberg

Monday, April 21, 2008, at 6:05 PM ET

"Afghanistan is the most daring and ambition mission in the history of NATO."—Bucharest, Romania, April 2, 2008

Click [here](#) to see video of Bush's comments. The Bushism is at 10:04.

Got a Bushism? Send it to [bushisms@slate.com](mailto:bushisms@slate.com). For more, see "[The Complete Bushisms](#)."

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## chatterbox

### Hillary Clinton, Ex-Arithmecrat

Enough with the fake metrics.

By Timothy Noah

Wednesday, April 23, 2008, at 3:29 PM ET

Hillary Clinton has every right to stay in the primary race for as long as she wishes. She would enjoy that right even if she hadn't [won yesterday's Pennsylvania primary](#). The reason she enjoys that right is that Barack Obama is still 544 primary delegates shy



of the 2,025 delegates he needs to nail down the Democratic nomination for president, according to the Associated Press' [delegate tracker](#). (Please note: Estimates of pledged delegates vary, and even AP's count will fluctuate as better information becomes available.) Unpledged superdelegates, who are harder to keep track of and can change their affiliations at any time, narrow Obama's nomination deficit to somewhere in the neighborhood of 310 delegates. Clinton's nomination deficit is 694 primary delegates, according to the AP. If you count superdelegates, her nomination deficit narrows to around 436 delegates. Given there are only 11 primaries left, none of them in delegate-rich states, it is very unlikely that Clinton will acquire the necessary 2,025 delegates before Obama does. Still, it's an arithmetic possibility. Arithmetic pedantry is practically the only friend Clinton has left.

Which makes it all the more baffling that Hillary is now quitting the arithmocracy. "We don't think this is just going to be about some numerical metric," Clinton strategist Geoff Garin [told Dan Balz](#) in the April 23 *Washington Post*. "When we get to those days after June 3<sup>rd</sup>, we think the real choice is who's proven themselves to be the best candidate." At first I thought perhaps Garin was merely pandering to Balz, who at heart is a momentocrat. But today Clinton herself is speaking the momentocrat dialect. "The tide is turning," she [said](#) this morning on CNN. "Thank You Pennsylvania," [reads](#) the banner headline today on Clinton's campaign home page. "You turned the tide. Keep the momentum going!" The message is emphatically *not* "You showed Obama's momentum doesn't exist," but "You showed that *we've* got the big mo!" Even if you believe in momentum as the organizing principle of presidential primary victories, though, you have to have *some* concrete idea about where that momentum can carry you. According to [Slate's Delegate Calculator](#), Clinton would need 80 percent of every remaining vote to catch up with Obama on pledged delegates. There's no chance anyone inside the Clinton campaign believes that is going to happen. It *can* happen, arithmetically, but the Clintonistas no longer believe in "numerical metrics."

Perhaps Garin read an earlier Chatterbox column ("[Agony of the Arithmocrats](#)"), in which I argued that if the delegate counts got *really close*, precise numbers wouldn't matter anymore. The trouble is that the delegate counts aren't getting really close and don't seem likely to in the future. Indeed, it's hard to know what "really close" would even mean, since political reporters and TV talking heads aren't even *trying* to hammer out a consensus on that question.

Anyway, it isn't completely true that the Clinton campaign no longer believes in arithmetic benchmarks. It would be more accurate to say that it no longer believes in the ones that matter. Clinton is still more than happy to sling *irrelevant* metrics. And the damned things keep changing! When Hillary started falling behind in primary delegates, her campaign emphasized her lead in superdelegates, the cigar-chomping party pros of yore who

know a thing or two about electability. They gave that up when superdelegates started drifting Obama's way. (At the moment, Hillary has only [25 more](#) superdelegates than Obama.) Then the Clinton campaign started arguing that you can't nominate for president someone who lacks a popular-vote majority in the primaries. They're starting to give that up because Clinton now has [little chance](#) of surpassing Obama in the popular vote. (That's just as well, because as Christopher Beam has [pointed out](#) in *Slate's* "Trailhead" blog, the caucuses screw up popular-vote counts as a reliable measure of candidate support. For what it's worth, [Obama's ahead](#) in the popular vote by somewhere between 500,000 and 600,000.)

As Clinton's prospects dim, her preferred metrics grow more rococo. The Democrats, Clinton now argues, can't afford to nominate someone who can't carry the big, industrial states that matter in the Electoral College. Never mind that, after the 2000 election, Clinton said the Electoral College should be [abolished](#) (she never followed through, [alas](#)), or that in the midst of an economic recession, it's hard to imagine Clinton supporters in hard-hit places like Ohio and Pennsylvania voting for the party in power. Obama's on the ropes, Clinton argues, because he [spent three times as much as she did](#) and still lost Pennsylvania to her by 10 points. But that's just another way of saying that Obama's campaign is flush and Clinton's is strapped for cash. And anyway, as long as we're being arithmetic, Clinton did *not* win Pennsylvania by the much-fetishized target margin of 10 points. She won it by [9.2 points](#), which rounds *down* to nine, not *up* to 10. Hillary's weirdest metric is that, if you count the primaries in Michigan (where Hillary was the *only* major candidate on the ballot!) and Florida (where neither Hillary nor Obama campaigned), she has won [more primary votes](#) than any previous Democratic nominee. So what? The Democratic National Committee [refuses to seat](#) the delegates from these states because they didn't follow party rules (a position Clinton had no problem accepting back when she had much more clout to change it; see "[Fair-Weather Wolverine](#)" by S.V. Dáte).

This isn't arithmocracy. It's arithmetic idolatry—the worship of irrelevant numbers. One can only assume that Clinton has decided the real numbers are too depressing. Does that mean the end of her campaign is near? I'm beginning to suspect so. Hand me that slide rule ...

*Momentocracy vs. Arithmocracy Archive:*

March 6, 2008: "[Agony of the Arithmocrats](#)"

Feb. 6, 2008: "[Triumph of the Arithmocrats](#)"

Feb. 1, 2008: [On the Media interview about momentocracy and arithmocracy](#), *New York Public Radio*

Jan. 30, 2008: "[Momentocrats vs. Arithmocrats, Part 2](#)"

Jan. 28, 2008: "[Momentocrats vs. Arithmocrats](#)"

Jan. 21, 2008: "[Is Obama Winning?](#)"

Dec. 11, 2007: "[Whose Nominee Is It, Anyway?](#)"

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## chatterbox

### Thomas Frank Speaks

The author of *What's the Matter With Kansas?* weighs in on Bittergate.

By Timothy Noah

Monday, April 21, 2008, at 6:49 PM ET

Thomas Frank has broken his silence.

For the last week or so, Frank been the most famous writer in Campaignland because of the flap over Barack Obama's [April 6 remark](#) about small-town Pennsylvanians getting "bitter" and clinging to "guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren't like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations." The observation plainly derived from Frank's 2004 book, *What's the Matter With Kansas?*, leading to much discussion, [in Slate](#) and elsewhere, about the book's ideas. "Almost everybody I encounter in politics is familiar with Frank's best-seller," [writes](#) Robert Novak, who hates the book, in his April 21 column. He asks: Is Obama "a modified Thomas Frank"? Republicans, Novak predicts, "will press the issue from now to November." Or rather, Novak surely means, they'll press it whenever they take a break from pressing whether Obama is a modified Jeremiah Wright or a modified Bill Ayers or a modified whoever else the GOP doesn't like whom they find it expedient to portray as Obama's Svengali.

The point is that an author can't buy publicity like this. Yet apart from [telling Barbara Ehrenreich](#) that he found the Obama flap "silly," Frank kept his own counsel, allowing other social commentators like [Ross Douthat](#) and [Larry Bartels](#) to fill the void and publicize new books of their own. Now Frank (who himself will this summer publish *The Wrecking Crew: How Conservatives Rule*) has at long last weighed in with an essay ("[Obama's Touch of Class](#)") that appears on, of all things, the *Wall Street Journal's* right-wing op-ed page, where Frank will soon begin writing a weekly column. (The *Journal* editpage has over the years provided a home to this or that token left-of-center columnist; in the past beneficiaries included Alexander Cockburn, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., and Michael Kinsley. They never seem to last very long.) Here is what Frank has to say:

- 1) "I have no way of knowing whether some passage of mine inspired" Obama's remark.
- 2) Obama's remark was "tactless."
- 3) Any suggestion that the insight, "the hard-done-by clutch guns and irrationally oppose free-trade deals" is drawn from *What's The*

*Matter With Kansas* is untrue insofar as "I oppose many of those trade deals myself."

4) What the "media flurry kicked up by Mr. Obama's gaffe" really confirms is "an argument I actually did make," i.e., that participants on all sides of the culture war are "talking about class without actually addressing the economic basis of the subject."

5) For instance, if we "become a little ... *bitter*" when we read about "hedge fund managers who made \$2 billion and \$3 billion last year," or about "the vaporizing of our home equity," then the pundits and politicians tell us "there is no place for such sentiment in the Party of the People," that "'bitterness' is an ugly and inadmissible emotion," and that "'divisiveness is a thing to be shunned at all costs."

6) On the other hand, when *conservatives* commodify bitterness with direct mail and talk radio, no one cries foul.

7) "The landmark political fact of our time is the replacement of our middle-class republic by a plutocracy."

8) Incidentally, when Hillary Clinton [gulped down a boilemaker](#) for the news cameras, the whiskey chaser was Crown Royal, "a luxury brand." ([Slogan](#): "It's about quality, not quantity.")

Frank doesn't mention religion, but he's [written elsewhere](#) that "I do not evaluate its role systematically" in *What's the Matter With Kansas*.

It seems clear from Frank's *Journal* piece that he prefers Obama to Clinton, and also that he doesn't wish to associate himself with either. (At the very least, Frank parts company with Obama on trade.) Frank's declaration that our "middle-class republic" has been replaced "by a plutocracy" is the sort of pompous after-dinner remark more typically belched out by aging *haute* populists like Lewis Lapham, Gore Vidal, Kevin Phillips, and Michael M. Thomas (all of whom, one can't help feeling, pine secretly for the days when privilege was based on bloodlines) than from lively young thinkers like Frank. This raises the depressing possibility that success is turning Frank into a windy, generalizing bore. On the other hand, Frank's sharp observation that conservatives are given free rein to exploit bitterness while liberals may not even acknowledge its existence suggests his mind is still alert. None of what Frank writes in the op-ed is



likely to be the least bit helpful to either Obama's friends or his enemies, which is just as well, since Bittergate has overstayed its welcome on the national stage.

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## chatterbox

### Hillary's Rev. Wright, Part 3

Clinton is only too happy to accept her endorsement from Richard Mellon Scaife's *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*.

By Timothy Noah

Monday, April 21, 2008, at 1:58 PM ET

That silence you hear is Hillary Clinton *not* telling the right-wing crackpot Richard Mellon Scaife where he can put the endorsement from his [money-losing fringe publication](#), the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*. The *Tribune-Review* [endorsed](#) Clinton on April 20. That was no great surprise, given Scaife's favorable March 30 column ("[Hillary, Reassessed](#)") published a few days after Clinton met with the *Tribune-Review*'s editorial board. (See "[Hillary's Rev. Wright](#)" and "[Hillary's Rev. Wright, Part 2.](#)")

Scaife, as I've noted before, is a slinger of hate speech much more toxic than anything ever uttered by Obama's pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright. During the 1990s, Scaife used the *Tribune-Review* to try to prove that Hillary Clinton killed White House Deputy Counsel Vince Foster, who committed suicide in 1993. Scaife has never retracted this allegation nor any of the other poisonous rumors he helped spread with a [\\$2.3 million](#) grant to the *American Spectator*. (The closest Sunday's endorsement came to acknowledging this shameful behavior was when it praised Clinton's courage in meeting with the editorial board "given our longstanding criticism of her.") Scaife is also a raging misogynist. In 1981 he called a reporter for the *Columbia Journalism Review* a "fucking Communist cunt"; more recently, he had his wife arrested and jailed for trespassing when she sought to confront him over his extramarital affair with a woman [twice arrested for prostitution](#). After they separated, he [posted on his front lawn](#) a sign that said WIFE AND DOG MISSING—REWARD FOR DOG. How Clinton, who portrays her candidacy as an advance for the cause of feminism, can stomach this creep's support is a mystery.

Perhaps you think that it isn't a candidate's responsibility to reject endorsements no matter how much that candidate recoils from the endorser. A case can be made for this position, but not by Clinton. In the [Feb. 26 presidential debate](#) in Cleveland, she chided Obama for "denouncing" but not "rejecting" an endorsement from Louis Farrakhan, prompting Obama to concede the point and say, "I would reject and denounce" it. This time, though, Hillary is neither rejecting nor denouncing her

endorsement from Scaife's *Tribune-Review*. Instead, she put out a [press release](#) quoting the most flattering parts.

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## Convictions

### State of Surveillance

In the high-tech battle between government and criminals, innocents can be victims.

Friday, April 25, 2008, at 8:55 AM ET

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## corrections

### Corrections

Friday, April 25, 2008, at 10:38 AM ET

In the April 21 "[Moneybox](#)," Dan Gross misspelled the name of Amanda Clardy.

In an April 21 "[Trailhead](#)," Chadwick Matlin incorrectly stated that a headline Hillary Clinton used in a recent ad hinted at JFK's handling of the Vietnam War. It actually referred to the Berlin Crisis. The post made invalid conclusions based on the error.

In the April 18 "[Chatterbox](#)," Timothy Noah wrote that Unity Mitford killed herself with a pistol when Britain declared war on Germany. Mitford survived the suicide attempt, albeit with extensive brain damage, and lived nine years more.

In the April 16 "[Explainer](#)," Chris Wilson originally stated that beneficiaries of a life insurance policy must be dependent on the person whose life is insured. It is the owner of the policy who must be dependent on the insured person.

In a 2006 "[A Fine Whine](#)" and a 2007 "[Recycled](#)," Melonyce McAfee mistakenly implied that Administrative Professionals Day is always celebrated on April 26. It is celebrated on the Wednesday of the last full week in April.

*If you believe you have found an inaccuracy in a **Slate** story, please send an e-mail to [corrections@slate.com](mailto:corrections@slate.com), and we will investigate. General comments should be [posted](#) in "The Fray," our reader discussion forum.*

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## culture gabfest

### The Culture Gabfest and Personal Virtue

Listen to *Slate*'s new show about the week in culture.

By Stephen Metcalf, Dana Stevens, and Julia Turner  
Wednesday, April 23, 2008, at 11:37 AM ET

*Listen to Culture Gabfest No. 6 with critics Stephen Metcalf, Dana Stevens, and Julia Turner by clicking the arrow on the audio player below:*

*You can also download the program [here](#), or you can subscribe to the new, dedicated Culture Gabfest podcast feed in iTunes by clicking [here](#).*

In this week's Culture Gabfest, critics Stephen Metcalf, Dana Stevens, and Julia Turner discuss whether personal virtue can solve global warming, the possible failure of personal virtue in the travel writing business, and the utter failure of personal virtue inside Abu Ghraib.

Here are links to some of the articles and other items mentioned in the show:

Michael Pollan's *New York Times Magazine* article "[Why Bother?](#)"  
Lynn Margulis and Dorion Sagan's [Slanted Truths: Essays on Gaia](#)  
Thomas Kohnstamm's book [Do Travel Writers Go to Hell?](#)  
Lonely Planet responds to the [Kohnstamm scandal](#)  
Errol Morris' [Standard Operating Procedure](#)  
Film: [Iraq in Fragments](#)  
["Photo Finish: How the Abu Ghraib photos morphed from scandal to law,"](#) by Dahlia Lithwick  
Julia's pick: [Hot Chip](#)  
[100 best novels from Random House](#)  
Dana's pick: Elizabeth Bowen's [The Death of the Heart](#)  
Stephen's pick: [The Bachelor](#)

Posted by Andy Bowers on April 23 at 11:37 a.m.

**[April 9, 2008](#)**

*Listen to Culture Gabfest No. 5, with critics Stephen Metcalf, Dana Stevens, and Julia Turner by clicking the arrow on the audio player below:*

*You can also download the program [here](#), or you can subscribe to the weekly Gabfest podcast feed in iTunes by clicking [here](#).*

In this week's Culture Gabfest, our critics discuss whether the latest *Vogue* cover is racist (or just the subject of misplaced outrage in the blogosphere), whether Hillary's tax return

explodes the Clintons' middle-class image, and whether the new online sitcom *The Guild* is for nerds only.

Here are links to some of the articles and other items mentioned in the show:

[Vogue's "King Kong" cover](#)  
[Slate's take on the Vogue cover](#)  
John Lennon and Yoko Ono on the [cover of Rolling Stone](#), photographed by Annie Leibovitz  
Hillary Clinton's [2007 tax return](#) (as disclosed by Hillary)  
*The Guild*: [official show site](#), [YouTube channel](#)  
[World of Warcraft](#)  
[Quarterlife](#) (no longer) on NBC  
[M. Ward and Zooey Deschanel](#)  
[AC/DC](#)  
[Am I That Name?](#) by Denise Riley  
BBC Radio 4's [Start the Week](#)

Posted by Amanda Aronczyk on April 9 at 11:12 a.m.

**[March 26, 2008](#)**

*Listen to Culture Gabfest No. 4 with critics Stephen Metcalf, Meghan O'Rourke, and John Swansburg by clicking the arrow on the audio player below:*

*You can also download the program [here](#), or you can subscribe to the weekly Gabfest podcast feed in iTunes by clicking [here](#).*

In this week's Culture Gabfest, our critics discuss whether Barack Obama was channeling Walt Whitman, whether the head of JPMorgan was channeling Gordon Gekko, and whether English professors should be channeling Wal-Mart associates.

Here are links to some of the articles and other items mentioned in the show:

Barack Obama's "[A More Perfect Union](#)" speech  
Walt Whitman's [Song of Myself](#)  
*New York* magazine's [profile](#) of Jamie Dimon  
Michael Douglas as [Gordon Gekko](#) in *Wall Street*  
Joseph Schumpeter's "[Creative Destruction](#)"  
The *New York Times*' "[You Say Recession, I Say 'Reservations!'](#)"  
"  
[NOBU](#) restaurant in New York City  
Gerald Graff's [Professing Literature: An Institutional History](#)  
Meghan's pick: [The Hakawati](#) by Rabih Alameddine  
John's pick: [Dispatches](#) by Michael Herr  
Stephen's pick: *Boys and Girls in America* from the [Hold Steady](#)

Posted by Andy Bowers on March 26 at 8:16 p.m.

**March 12, 2008**

*Listen to Culture Gabfest No. 3 with critics Stephen Metcalf, Dana Stevens, and John Swansburg by clicking the arrow on the audio player below:*

*You can also download the program [here](#), or you can subscribe to the weekly Gabfest podcast feed in iTunes by clicking [here](#).*

Our newest podcast, the Culture Gabfest, is back just in time to take on the Eliot Spitzer meltdown and how it's echoing through the media. Critics Stephen Metcalf, Dana Stevens, and John Swansburg also discuss the recent rash of fake memoirs and a breakout blog that claims to shed light on stuff white people like.

Here are links to some of the items mentioned in this week's episode:

"[The Fake Memoirist's Survival Guide](#)" on *Slate*  
[A Fan's Notes](#) by Frederick Exley  
The [Stuff White People Like](#) blog  
[Stuff White People Like](#) on NPR's *Talk of the Nation*  
Dana Stevens' pick: [Chop Shop](#)  
John Swansburg's pick: [Amazons: An Intimate Memoir by the First Women To Play in the National Hockey League](#) by Cleo Birdwell (aka Don DeLillo)  
Stephen Metcalf's pick: [Top Gear](#) from BBC America

Posted by Andy Bowers on March 12 at 11:55 a.m.

**Feb. 28, 2008**

*Here's the sophomore outing of our newest audio program, the Culture Gabfest, with critics Stephen Metcalf, Dana Stevens, and Julia Turner. To listen, click the arrow on the audio player below:*

*You can also download the program [here](#), or you can subscribe to the weekly Gabfest podcast feed in iTunes by clicking [here](#).*

In this edition, the panelists discuss the aftermath of the Oscars, the challenge Barack Obama poses for comedians, and Lindsay Lohan's Marilyn Monroe impression. Here are some of the links for items mentioned in the show:

Daniel Day-Lewis' [Oscar acceptance speech](#)  
*Saturday Night Live*'s [Obama/Clinton debate sketch](#)  
Lindsay Lohan's [New York magazine photo shoot](#)  
Julia Turner's [Oscar fashion dialogue](#) with Amanda Fortini  
[The Encyclopedia Baracktannica](#)

Posted by Andy Bowers on Feb. 28 at 3:07 p.m.

**Feb. 14, 2008**

*To play the first Culture Gabfest, click the arrow on the player below.*

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**culturebox**

## **The Music Industry's Extortion Scheme**

The record labels want you to pay a tax on music. It's not as horrible as it sounds.

By Reihan Salam

Friday, April 25, 2008, at 7:03 AM ET

What would you do if a bully—let's call him "Joey Giggles"—kept snatching your ice-cream cone? OK, now what if Joey Giggles then told you, "If you pay me five bucks a month, I'll stop snatching your ice cream." Depending on how much you hate getting beaten up, and how much you love ice-cream cones, you might decide that caving in is the way to go. This is what's called a protection racket. It's also potentially the new model for how we'll buy and listen to music.

Let's back up for a second. Four companies (Universal Music Group, Warner Music Group, Sony BMG, and EMI) control a staggering 90 percent of all record sales in the United States, and they're hopping mad. CD sales are in free fall, and the recording industry's revenues have shrunk from \$15 billion to \$10 billion in less than a decade. Instead of blaming themselves for failing to embrace the Internet soon enough, Big Music has pointed the finger at piracy, shaking down scofflaw MP3 downloaders with capricious, multimillion-dollar lawsuits. This has not strengthened the record companies' position—at this point, they're losing money *and* everybody hates them.

Now Big Music is mulling the Joey Giggles approach. Warner Music Group is trying to rally the rest of the industry behind [a plan](#) to charge Internet service providers \$5 per customer per month, an amount that would be added to your Internet bill. In exchange, music lovers would get all the online tunes they want, meaning that anyone who spends more than \$60 a year on music will come out way ahead. Download whatever you want and pay nothing! No more DRM! Swap files to your heart's content—we promise, we won't sue you (or snatch your ice-cream cone)!

Michael Arrington of TechCrunch has [condemned](#) this idea as a "music tax" and "the music industry's extortion scheme." Though the proposal is not technically a tax—rather, it's a call for "voluntary blanket licensing agreements"—it will certainly feel like one. And instead of paying for roads, schools, and bombs, you would be helping to keep record executives in cigars and the finest silks. As Arrington argues, there is good reason to believe that this huge pot of money will turn the music industry

into a lazy near-monopoly that lives off of fat royalty checks. Once the majors get this guaranteed revenue stream, won't they just spend all their time scheming to increase the fee from \$5 per customer per month to \$7.50? There's also the small matter that not all Internet users listen to or download popular music. If this plan somehow goes through, millions of moms and dads who pay for Net access so junior can browse Britannica Online will find that they are subsidizing the hedonistic lifestyles of America's most-tattooed singing sensations.

Despite all the downsides, something like the music tax simply has to happen. Most of us don't want to steal music. But it takes a saintly person (like me) to jump through hoops to pay for something you can get for free. I use eMusic and Amazon.com, which both offer DRM-free MP3 downloads. Yet cheapskates galore still have their Limewire and BitTorrent and whatever future file-sharing tools savvy Web guerrillas haven't even dreamed up yet.

That's why piracy can't be stopped. Meanwhile, artists aren't being compensated in a sensible way. Sure, some musicians will make a living by playing live shows and selling T-shirts. A massively popular band like Radiohead can give away its music and still make millions. But plenty of other artists will no longer be able to make a living in the music business as royalties dry up, which will leave our culture a little less vital and a little less fun. What we need is a reward system, one that could eliminate middlemen and encourage a massive upsurge in creativity.

Which leads us back to the music industry's extortion scheme. It's not clear that the major labels will line up behind Warner's big idea. Universal Music Group, the biggest of the big, has pushed for [a subscription plan called Total Music](#) that is similar in some respects, so they might be receptive. The one thing that all of the major labels agree on is that they have to put iTunes in its place. Apple's online store [just surpassed Wal-Mart](#) as America's No. 1 music retailer. The record industry fears that if iTunes further extends its dominance, it will start dictating terms to the major labels—calling for, among other things, lower prices. For the major labels, things like subscription plans and music taxes are enticing because they're opportunities to cut iTunes out of the loop: If you're coughing up \$5 a month to Big Music, you'll never pay 99 cents for a song again.

Of course, Apple has its own plan for world domination. Last month, the *Financial Times* [reported](#) that Steve Jobs was pushing the major labels to make a deal that would let them peddle an unlimited music bundle. Apple reportedly wants to pay the majors \$20 per iPod or iPhone to access all the songs in their catalogs. The majors want Apple to cough up closer to \$80. In practice, this all-you-can-eat plan could mean a few different things. By paying an extra, say, \$100 when you buy an iPod, you could have access to everything sold on iTunes. (Or, perhaps iPhone users could pay a subscription fee for the same deal.) While the details are still hazy, the upshot is that owning an

Apple product would become even more appealing. The nice thing about this deal for the majors is that the labels earn less than \$20 per iPod in download sales now, so anything above that would be gravy. The not-so-nice thing is that it would further entrench iTunes as a musical monolith. Are the major labels sure they want to become Steve Jobs' lackeys? Right now, iTunes controls more than one-fifth of all music sales in the United States. If Jobs gets his way on all-you-can-eat, that share will grow and grow until the labels will never be able to say no to him again. Cue maniacal cackling! The scrappy folks at eMusic have already cried foul, pointing out that the rumored deal smacks of a Microsoft-style antitrust violation. The major labels would be wise to take eMusic's lead.

All-you-can-eat iTunes works for Apple. Voluntary blanket licensing works for Big Music. The problem is that both of these grand plans cut out the little guy. Apple wants to ensure that the iPod will crush all other music-playing devices for 1,000 years by building an overwhelmingly dominant music retail platform. Big Music sells 90 percent of records; if they manage to squeeze money out of the ISPs, one suspects they'd be more than happy to screw the independent labels that make up the other 10 percent.

What plan will work best for music lovers and artists? Instead of a fake music tax, the best solution might be—sorry, libertarians—for the government to step in with a *real* music tax. In the book [Promises To Keep: Technology, Law, and the Future of Entertainment](#), Harvard Law School professor William Fisher devised an ingenious reward system that levels the playing field for artists. At first glance, it looks a lot like the music biz extortion scheme. The feds would levy a small tax on all broadband subscribers. Musicians, signed and unsigned, would register their creations with the U.S. Copyright Office, who would then set up a massive Nielsen-style sample of music listeners to track the popularity of different songs. The more your song is played, the more you get paid. The revenue from the tax would be parceled out to the copyright holders.

The beauty of this approach is that it has the potential to cut out middlemen like Steve Jobs and the fat-cat record execs. My [a cappella version of "Chocolate Rain"](#) would have as much chance of making it as "Purple Rain," at least in theory. When the costs of discovering new music are zero and artists are paid on the basis of how often songs are played, listeners are more adventurous and bands with dedicated followers can make as much scratch as bands that record big hits. Bands get paid, music lovers can listen to their hearts' delight, and the record companies will slowly turn to dust. What's not to like?



culturebox

## Falling for Fall Out Boy

Did the Roots just trick me into liking a lame emo band?

By Ben Mathis-Lilley

Thursday, April 24, 2008, at 6:54 AM ET

Casually browsing the music blogs not long ago, I read that the Roots are putting out a new album at the end of this month. Good news, I thought. I like almost all of their previous work and had recently watched them rage through a highly entertaining two-hour show full of new material, so as far as I knew, they still had the spark. To my chagrin, however, I saw that their new single, "Birthday Girl," was a collaboration with Patrick Stump, lead singer of the punk-pop band Fall Out Boy.

Now, I don't really know anything about Fall Out Boy, but I understand that I'm expected not to like them. They wear hair gel, and one of the guys in the band dates Ashlee Simpson, so it's fair to assume that they suck and that their fans are vapid teenyboppers whose heads would explode if they heard what real rock 'n' roll sounds like. What kind of lame middlebrow loser do the Roots take me for?

The Roots news was disappointing, but not surprising. Top-notch rappers have a history of puzzling collaborations with cheesy rock 'n' rollers. Off the top of my head, I could recall a number of otherwise-respectable rappers who'd worked with middle-of-the-road top-40 types: Kanye West ("Heard 'Em Say" with Maroon 5's Adam Levine, "Homecoming" with Coldplay's Chris Martin), Jay-Z (who released a version of his song "Encore" remixed with instrumentals and vocal tracks from Linkin Park's "Numb"), Dr. Dre (who brought in Gwen Stefani to sing the hook for Eve's "Let Me Blow Your Mind"), and even the Roots themselves, who employed Nelly Furtado on the track "Sacrifice" from their 2002 album *Phrenology*. (This was in Furtado's [nonthreatening songstress](#) days, before she started giving her albums titles like *Loose*.) Indeed, the release most frequently and [hyperbolically](#) cited as the moment hip-hop ascended to commercial viability is Run DMC's 1985 remake of Aerosmith's "Walk This Way." While Aerosmith was cool then, they must be retroactively downgraded severely for releasing the love theme to *Armageddon*.

Why do rappers whose work I hold in such high regard have such terrible taste in rock? The answer started to become clear when I gave "Birthday Girl," the Roots-Patrick Stump song, a courtesy listen and was greatly disturbed to discover that I liked it. It's catchy; Stump has the right voice for the mellow hook, and the Roots' estimable rhythm section gives a sharp edge to what otherwise would have been a straightforward mid-tempo rock song:

Upon searching my soul, I realized that I had to admit that I in fact liked almost all the songs that I named earlier. "[Let Me Blow Your Mind](#)" is an unjustly forgotten club grinder; "Homecoming," "[Heard 'Em Say](#)," and "Sacrifice" all get stuck in my head from time to time; "[Numb/Encore](#)" is a staple of the various Workout Mega-Jam mixes that I've made over the years. I was a bit taken aback; cultural snobbery is such an integral part of my personality. I'd have to rethink a lot of things if it turned out I liked listening to Fall Out Boy, Maroon 5, and Linkin Park.

Fortunately, a quick zip through the iTunes store reassured me that I don't. Those bands have recorded some memorably hummable singles but don't have much musical range and seem to almost purposefully employ instrumentation and vocal effects indistinguishable from all the other bands working in their already well-trod genres. (Fall Out Boy seems the most promising—I could see them making an album I really liked—and while Linkin Park is never going to be my thing, they're not bad at what they do. Maroon 5 is elevator music from the depths of hell.) But these bands' songwriting and production tendencies, I realized, are beside the point. They're not in the studio to write and record a double album with a rapper; they're stopping by for a day to lay down vocals for a single.

Stump et Al. are seen by their hip-hop collaborators, I think, as living samples, picked out of the musical spectrum because their voices have some distinctive quality that the Roots or Kanye West or Dr. Dre want on their track. And, indeed, all three of those artists are known for eclectic record collections—the first person sampled on Kanye's last album is Elton John—and for perfectionism. Stefani has spoken about recording and rerecording her two lines on "Let Me Blow Your Mind" for hours before Dr. Dre was satisfied, which is illustrative. He was perfecting a Sassy Temptress effect, just as Kanye used Chris Martin to add a little Gripping Melancholy to his track about returning to his hometown of Chicago. Adam Levine has an indisputably fantastic voice for the wistful soul of "Heard 'Em Say." In fact, our civilization would be better off if he sang only hooks and covers, though his projects should still be subject to regulatory oversight.

The mental picture of the collaborator-selection process I've settled on has the added benefit of not involving any of my favorite bad-ass rappers and producers giggling with adolescent excitement over the prospect of working with a gelled-up Patrick Stump. Rather, I see them burning the midnight oil as everyone else on their cross-country charter flight slumbers away, obsessively searching iTunes until they find the exact ingredient their next hit is missing. (All the while, they sip a refreshingly crisp Coors Light; my mind's eye has gullibly internalized [this](#) Dre-featuring Coors ad.)

Of course, my mental Coors commercial would be more honest if it showed those guys doing a bit of *Billboard*-browsing as well. Big-time sales success is not an abhorrent sign of



mediocrity for rappers, as it is to a lot of today's rockers; for many rappers, the signifiers of cool and the signifiers of mass success are interchangeable. So it's likely that even the most artistically exacting hip-hop producers weigh Maroon 5's uncoolness against their chart appeal a little differently than I would.

This is not to say that rappers have always gotten that balance right—there was a steep learning curve. While some of the examples previously cited were significant hits, the more distant history of the rap-rock crossover includes a lot of disasters. Most famous among these is probably the soundtrack to the movie *Judgment Night*, which featured matchups like Slayer/Ice-T and Pearl Jam/Cypress Hill. Q-Tip's 1999 song "End of Time," with nu-metal pioneers Korn, was in the same vein. Those bands are all more sonically distinctive and technically adroit than Maroon 5, but the results of the collaborations fail for an obvious reason: Rather than featuring one distinctive element of a band's sound in a backing beat, the entire group goes full blast while someone raps. It sounds like what happens when a band's MySpace page starts playing while you've already got iTunes open; it sounds, in other words, like the kind of cacophony that people like my parents think *all rap* consists of.

But while I'm happy that things have come around to the point at which rap-rock synergism is worth listening to, I still wonder whether I'll ever get the indie hero/hip-hop hero crossover that I crave. If any major hip-hop producers are reading this, get in touch; I have lots of great ideas! Songs like Jay-Z's "99 Problems," Dead Prez's "Hell Yeah," and countless Beastie Boys tracks demonstrate that distorted guitar riffs can make for a great hip-hop sound, provided they're kept sparse and inserted into a song with surgical precision—and, come on, Jonny Greenwood and Jack White can't even tune up without laying down the most killer sparse-surgical riff you've ever heard! On the vocal side, Wayne Coyne and Thom Yorke could contribute ethereally beautiful and ethereally nightmarish hooks, respectively. (The Roots actually do sample Radiohead on *Game Theory*'s "Atonement," but it's not at the front of the mix.)

In these last days of the record business as we know it, established indie-rockers are as good a sales bet as anyone else. So why not get the best rap acts and the best indie acts in the studio together? It might produce some great songs, it could move a lot of units, and—I say this with significantly less condescension than I would have a few weeks ago—it might introduce some vapid middlebrow teeny-boppers to bands they'll like even more than Fall Out Boy.

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## culturebox

### Save the Mount!

Why Edith Wharton's house is an architectural treasure.

By Kate Bolick  
Monday, April 21, 2008, at 7:22 AM ET

Outside design circles, not many people know that Edith Wharton's first publication was a decorating manual. It's a perplexing fact. Our own American grande dame, author of more than 40 books, friend of Henry James and Theodore Roosevelt ... bothered herself with wallpaper and sconces? (Actually, she loathed wallpaper.) But after the initial shock, perhaps you'll remember reading *The Age of Innocence* or seeing Martin Scorsese's film adaptation of it and realize that Wharton is fused in your mind with masterfully described interiors—at which point, your confusion will click into a satisfied "Huh!" If so, you might be moved, as I was, to rent a car and go visit [the Mount](#), the only one of Wharton's many residences remaining. But act fast: If the Mount doesn't somehow acquire \$3 million by April 24, the bank is going to shut it down. The interiors you're about to see may be lost to the public forever.

**Update, April 24, 2008:** Thanks in part to contributions from *Slate* readers, the Mount was able to get its foreclosure deadline extended from today to May 31. Susan Wissler, acting executive director of the Mount, wrote, "*Slate* had much to do with the extension. The uptick in web contributions from the day the *Slate* piece appeared was immediate and significant." Keep up the good work. The [official site of the Mount](#) has all the details.

Click [here](#) to read a slide-show essay about the Mount.

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## dear prudence

### Guess Who's Coming to Diwali

My traditional Indian parents won't accept my white girlfriend. What can I do?  
Thursday, April 24, 2008, at 6:53 AM ET

Get "Dear Prudence" delivered to your inbox each week; click [here](#) to sign up. Please send your questions for publication to [prudence@slate.com](mailto:prudence@slate.com). (Questions may be edited.)

#### Dear Prudence,

I am a 25-year-old Indian-American who has been in this country since I was 5. I started dating a Caucasian classmate four and a half years ago in college. The romance bloomed, and we are still together. She is kind, loving, beautiful, and a great inspiration. I see us together for the rest of our lives. There is only one problem: My parents are very traditional Indians and

have told me since I was a young boy that they wanted me to have an arranged marriage, and if I did "bring home an American girl" that they would disown me. After two years, I told them about the relationship, and they were rightfully hurt and upset I'd kept it a secret. They say now that they were "joking" about disowning me and that I should have come to them. But it is close to three years later, and my girlfriend has still never met my parents. I greet holidays with a sense of dread because I feel pulled in two different directions. Even when I bring her up in conversation, they quickly change the subject or just walk away. They say that my relationship is just "a phase" and that I will "come to my senses." I also feel a sense of embitterment from my girlfriend for being completely shunned by her potential in-laws. My parents have told me that they will accept my girlfriend when we become engaged, but by then I fear that their attempt to build bridges will be too little, too late. I know that my parents love me and want the best for me, but is there anything I can do to unhardened their hearts?

—Curry and French Fries

Dear Curry,

In 1922, a play debuted on Broadway called [Abie's Irish Rose](#), about a Jewish boy and Catholic girl who marry, much to the distress of both their parents (an [issue still being played out today](#)). Your parents are only the latest wave of immigrants wanting to experience the freedom and opportunity of America, while making sure their children don't use this freedom and opportunity to find a spouse outside their religion, race, or ethnicity. Your parents have been sending you wildly mixed messages: They say, *You will be disowned if you don't take an Indian wife*. Then they tell you, *Oh, we were just kidding*. They say, *You should have told us about your girlfriend!* But their behavior says, *We're going to keep pretending she doesn't exist*. Now they say, *We'll get to know her when you get engaged*. But if you do, I think you'll find they really mean, *Get engaged, and we'll stick our heads in the tandoor*. While it's wonderful you have respect and deference for your parents, you are 25 years old and have been with this woman for almost five years—you are even contemplating marrying her. So you must insist to your parents that the next time you come home for the holidays, you are bringing your girlfriend along. Explain that while you don't know exactly what the future will bring vis-à-vis your relationship, you can no longer stand to be torn in opposite directions by the people in your life whom you love the most.

—Prudie

### ***Dear Prudence Video: Way Too Much Information***

**Prudence,**

I have a wonderful job in a small, close-knit office, but I am starting to worry about my co-worker "Kelly." She seems to be obsessed with herbal and Eastern medicine. She is a self-proclaimed expert, having read various Internet articles and

prescribed a dozen herbs for herself. If someone is sniffly, Kelly won't hesitate to give them a handful of zinc tablets and her own prescriptive advice. Surprisingly (or maybe not so surprisingly), Kelly is in poor physical health but refuses to listen to her doctors, since they tend to contradict what she has "learned" from the Internet. My biggest concern is that Kelly works with many poorly educated and disabled people, and I have recently heard her recommending various herbal supplements. I am not an M.D., but I do have a medical education, certainly enough to know that excessive herbal medicines can have unexpected (sometimes lethal) effects. I have tried hinting politely, but Kelly is certain herbal medicines are the best cure for anything. Prudence, I'm worried someone will take her advice and end up very sick or worse! I don't want to burn any bridges, but I feel I should say something. Help!

—Take an Aspirin

Dear Take,

Unless you and Kelly work at a health-food-supply company, I assume this moonlighting of hers is unrelated to the job at hand. Certainly, people are responsible for their own stupid decisions, but I agree there is no reason for you to sit back and watch her potentially harm colleagues. Stop hinting and tell her directly that you are concerned about the possible side effects of her "remedies." You can hand her [this article](#) by Jane Brody of the *New York Times* about the complications physicians are seeing in patients who don't tell them about the buckets of supplements they are taking. Sure, Kelly will probably pay no attention, but you might want to print out copies of the article and leave them in the coffee room. If Kelly continues to practice medicine without a license on company time, you might need to bring this to the attention of a boss or to human resources. Say that as reluctant as you are to discuss your colleague, you are concerned about the dangers Kelly may be causing vulnerable people.

—Prudie

**Dear Prudie,**

I'm not sure how to go about handling this situation. My ex-husband and I divorced nearly a year ago after an eight-year marriage. We realized once the divorce was final that we had made a big mistake and have decided to reconcile. We are getting remarried. Our family and friends are supportive of us getting back together. Neither one of us is sure how to do this. Do we have another wedding? Do we do it quietly at the justice of the peace? Elope in Vegas? We would like to celebrate this occasion with our family and friends, but we're not quite sure how to do it.

—Bride Again

Dear Bride,

Cary Grant's early career would have gone nowhere without the ["comedy of remarriage"](#). But if you make your friends and

family sit through another wedding, they will be thinking less of *The Philadelphia Story* or *His Girl Friday* than that "comedy of déjà vu" *Groundhog Day*. Congratulations on your re-up of your nuptials, but this is the kind of occasion where a trip to city hall or a ceremony attended by only those very close to you should suffice. Then a party later (put out the word: "no gifts, please!") to celebrate true love would be lovely.

—Prudie

### Dear Prudie

Would it be considered bad manners to eat popcorn in the following way: to take a handful (about five pieces) from the bowl with one hand and eat the popcorn one piece at a time with the other hand? The reason given for doing it this way is to keep the hand used to eat the popcorn out of the bowl. The reason given to think it is rude is that it is considered hoarding. Are there any given ideas for eating this kind of food from a shared community bowl? My family has been fighting over this for 14 years.

—The Popcorns

Dear Popcorns,

What a refreshing change popcorn is from the usual causes of decades-long familial battles: toothpaste-tube squeezing, toilet-seat positioning, dirty-sock strewing. For your family, fighting about how to eat popcorn is as crucial to your popcorn-eating pleasure as butter and salt are for everyone else. I'm not going to take sides and ruin all your fun!

—Prudie

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## Deathwatch

### The Hillary Deathwatch

Superdelegates are still skittish, but at least Clinton has some money in her pocket.

By Chadwick Matlin

Thursday, April 24, 2008, at 2:44 PM ET

It must be nice to be Hillary Clinton right now. Adoring fans have given her \$10 million. The media have started to believe that she can actually win. Jeremiah Wright is coming out of hibernation just in time to derail Obama's candidacy once and for all. Sure, her chances of winning the nomination are on the rise (by 1.4 points, to **12.1 percent**). But you know what? She still can't win.

First, the good news: [Raising \\$10 million in the 30 or so hours](#) after her win in Pennsylvania is a very good thing. It means

people still care about her, superdelegates can still trust her, and she can still buy [Star Trek pantsuits](#). The money bomb is an impressive fiscal feat for Clinton. Even better, it upstages Obama on his best political attribute—fundraising prowess.

It gets better. Remember our old friend the Rev. Wright? Well, he's tired of being cooped up, and he's [coming home to roost](#). Over the next week, he'll appear on [Bill Moyers](#) (to air on Friday), deliver a keynote address to the NAACP Detroit branch, and speak at the National Press Club. The more face time Wright gets, the better for Hillary Clinton—even if she never broaches the subject.

And for the cherry on top, [the media continue to entertain](#) the idea that Clinton could actually win. The cover of *Time* suggests "There Can Only Be One," with photos of both Democratic candidates. [Chris Cillizza says](#) she has a plausible path to the nomination. The *Wall Street Journal* says that [doubts are being stirred](#) about Obama. Clinton and company must be giddy over these developments, as they could persuade superdelegates.

With all that good stuff, her chances should easily climb above 15 percent, right? No.

Right now, the Clinton Kool-Aid is on tap, and the media are doing keg stands. The same writers who once said Clinton was doomed are now ignoring the fact that the math is even more oppressive for Clinton. Obama will likely need to convince 25 percent to 35 percent of the about 300 uncommitted superdelegates to support him, and he will reach the 2,024 delegates needed to become the nominee. Put another way, Clinton needs to convince 65 percent to 75 percent of them to vote for her. That's 200 elected officials and party bigwigs she needs to convince not to support the guy who has the most pledged delegates. Moreover, she won't win the popular vote if Obama wins North Carolina—the biggest state remaining—by a blowout margin ([as polls suggest he will](#)).

Not to mention the real reason a Clinton comeback won't happen: Superdelegates still aren't endorsing her. Since her win in Pennsylvania, Obama has announced three super endorsements; Clinton has announced one. Clinton's new friend is [Rep. John Tanner of Tennessee](#), a state she won easily. Obama's three are from Nebraska (a state he won), Oklahoma (where Clinton destroyed him), and Oregon (which hasn't even voted yet). Adding one new superdelegate and a pile of cash does not [turn the tide](#). Quantitatively and qualitatively, Obama still has the winning hand.

*For a full list of our Deathwatches, [click here](#). For a primer on Hillary's sinking ship, visit [our first Deathwatch entry](#). Send your own prognostications to [hillarydeathwatch@gmail.com](mailto:hillarydeathwatch@gmail.com).*

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## Deathwatch

### The Hillary Deathwatch

Clinton has a shot at winning the popular vote. Unfortunately, she's broke.

By Christopher Beam

Wednesday, April 23, 2008, at 11:54 AM ET

On Monday, we [predicted](#) Clinton's margin of victory in Pennsylvania: "Clinton will win by eight points—just high enough for her to stick around, just low enough for Obama supporters to claim she's done." As it turns out, we were off; it was more like 10 points. But our conclusion still stands: Clinton now has an excuse to drag her delegate-hemorrhaging candidacy around for a few more weeks. But despite the gloomy prospects, we're hiking her chances of winning the nomination up 0.8 points to **10.7 percent**.

Why the raise? Two words: popular vote. As we and everyone who can read knows, Clinton has no shot of closing Obama's pledged-delegate lead. Her candidacy therefore depends on convincing superdelegates to vote for her *despite* that lead. But vague claims of "electability" aren't enough. She needs numbers on her side, and the popular vote is her last shot at beating Obama by a legitimate metric. With Pennsylvania under her belt—the primary netted her a little more than 200,000 votes—Clinton now trails Obama by about 500,000, according to [RealClearPolitics](#). And that's *before* the spin. If you count Florida's and Michigan's votes, which she no doubt will, Obama's popular-vote lead shrinks to about 100,000. Whether or not she closes that gap, she's close enough to argue that they're tied.

Plus, this buys Clinton time to push her other talking points: She wins "big states" (which of course has [no discernable bearing](#) on general-election viability). She commands coalitions necessary to win the presidency in November. She is more "electable" than Obama against McCain. These arguments don't hold much water in the face of electoral math, but, then again, superdelegates aren't quite rational creatures.

Unfortunately, Clinton is still broke. FEC reports released yesterday [showed](#) that her campaign started April in the red, and that was before the Pennsylvania advertising blitzkrieg. Once the networks called the state for Clinton, a spokesman fired off an e-mail announcing she had raised hundreds of thousands of dollars in 20 minutes. The number was [up to \\$2.5 million](#) as of 11:30 p.m. That's good news, but remember that every Clinton fundraising number has been methodically eclipsed by the

Obama money machine. Who knows: This time could be different.

Next up: Indiana. Recent polls are [indecisive](#), but Clinton has reason to fear Obama in the Hoosier State, where basketball chops are as important as stimulus packages. North Carolina, meanwhile, is [about as suspenseful](#) as a double-headed coin toss.

*For a full list of our Deathwatches, [click here](#). For a primer on Hillary's sinking ship, visit [our first Deathwatch entry](#). Send your own prognostications to [hillarydeathwatch@gmail.com](mailto:hillarydeathwatch@gmail.com).*

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## Deathwatch

### The Hillary Deathwatch

Despite a flurry of attacks, Clinton holds steady in Pennsylvania.

By Christopher Beam

Monday, April 21, 2008, at 1:36 PM ET

Despite a flurry of negative ads from both sides, Hillary Clinton's Pennsylvania lead holds steady. So with no clear ups or downs, we're putting her chances of winning the nomination at **9.9 percent**.

*If you don't have something nice to say, don't say anything at all.* Both Clinton and Barack Obama chucked that philosophy out the window long ago, but this weekend marked the nastiness apex, as Clinton aired an [attack ad](#) responding to an [attack ad](#) by Obama responding to an [attack ad](#) by Clinton. (Followed by Clinton's "[closing argument](#)" ad.) The ads mostly rehashed old battles over lobbyist money and health care but with renewed vigor. Neither candidate comes out on top, but the mudslinging hurts Obama more since it [undermines](#) his entire "new politics" message. He claims Clinton's attacks have forced him to throw elbows, but in our experience, "she hit me first" stopped being a valid excuse after second grade.

Obama made yet another "gaffe" over the weekend when he said that "either Democrat would be better than John McCain, and all three of us would be better than George Bush." Not quite on message—Obama's campaign has been painting McCain as Bush 3.0—but hardly a devastating blunder. Obama can always point out that "better than Bush" isn't much of a compliment. Also, recall that Clinton said McCain had [passed](#) "the commander in chief threshold" whereas Obama had not.

On the superdelegate front, Obama is still closing the gap but slower than before. Today he [picks up](#) Ohio DNC member Enid Goubeaux. But Clinton racked up [three more supers](#) at the end of last week—Ohio Rep. Betty Sutton and two New Jersey ex-



governors. That gives Clinton 262 to Obama's 237. Supers are now watching to see what happens in Pennsylvania.

So what *will* happen? [All of the most recent polls](#) except one show Clinton with a six-to-10 point lead over Obama—roughly the same as Clinton's lead over the past few weeks. The outlier, a PPP poll, puts Obama three points ahead. But it's possible these polls understate Obama's support, given the [massive numbers of newly registered Democrats](#). (About 217,000 new voters, largely Democrats, have registered since January. More than 178,000 voters have switched their party affiliation, overwhelmingly in favor of Dems.) It's hard to say if that will be enough for Obama to cut into Clinton's margin in any significant way. But that, as they say, is why they play the game.

In endorsement news, Obama wins the blessing of the Salmon Lady. The *Financial Times* may not be the chosen paper of Pennsylvania's white working class, but the timing is still good for Obama, who will take all the help he can get.

Conventional wisdom suggests that Clinton needs to win by about 10 points in Pennsylvania in order to stay in the race. Her campaign puts the number around one point. What this means, of course, is that Clinton will win by eight points—just high enough for her to stick around, just low enough for Obama supporters to claim she's done. You heard it here first!

*For a full list of our Deathwatches, [click here](#). For a primer on Hillary's sinking ship, visit [our first Deathwatch entry](#). Send your own prognostications to [hillarydeathwatch@gmail.com](mailto:hillarydeathwatch@gmail.com).*

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**did you see this?**

## **41 Hours in an Elevator**

Thursday, April 24, 2008, at 5:47 PM ET

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**dispatches**

## **To Leave or Not To Leave?**

After decades in Pakistan, thousands of refugees return "home" to Afghanistan.

By Anna Husarska

Tuesday, April 22, 2008, at 8:02 AM ET

JALOZAI, Pakistan—To leave or not to leave? That is the question 80,000 Afghans in the [Jalozai refugee camp](#), located 20 miles from Peshawar, must ask themselves. It is not a theoretical matter: Last week, almost three decades after it was set up, the camp officially [closed](#).

Those displaced by the fighting in Iraq and Darfur at least receive some international attention, but the world's biggest refugee crisis for more than a quarter of a century is now a largely forgotten "old caseload." These are Afghans who fled the Soviet invasion and the many upheavals that followed. Three million have already returned home, but more than 2 million are still in Pakistan and 1 million in Iran. Jalozai is the biggest of the remaining [86 camps](#) in Pakistan, all slated for closure sooner or later.

The security situation in Afghanistan [is not getting better](#), but the new coalition government in Islamabad has no more patience for hosting such a huge refugee population than the previous Musharraf government did. Formal agreements about [repatriation](#) were reached between Islamabad, Kabul, and [UNHCR](#), the U.N. refugee agency.

Repatriation is always the most desirable conclusion to a refugee crisis, provided it is safe and voluntary. Yet during the [registration](#) conducted by UNHCR and the Pakistani Ministry of State and Frontier Regions in 2007, 84 percent of Afghans in Pakistan said they didn't want to "return," even though their registration cards say in big letters "Afghan citizen." No wonder: Most were born here, and they have never set foot in Afghanistan; few have a house or land to go back to. But the opportunities for staying in Pakistan legally are practically nonexistent, so return may be the lesser evil. Thus the dilemma.

"Leave," says Ahmedzai, an elegant and soft-spoken 53-year-old technician who works for a [de-mining company](#) in Kabul. He came to Peshawar while fighting the Soviet invasion. He kept his family in Pakistan after he found the job in Afghanistan in 1995, because he wanted a good education for his sons. He has no house in Kabul, but he is anxious to be "home" because the daily announcements about the impending closure that are blasted from the loudspeakers in the camp's mosque create unbearable pressure on all the camp inhabitants, including Ahmedzai when he comes on leave to relax from his nerve-wrecking de-mining job.

"Stay," says Haq, a fortysomething ethnic Turkmen from Mazar-i-Sharif in northwestern Afghanistan, who came fleeing the Taliban. He receives me with his wife and children sitting on their carpet-weaving frame, wool flakes littering the space. He worries that given the low prices [for carpets in Afghanistan](#), he could not make a living from weaving. A political refugee when he came to Pakistan, he now seems economically ill-prepared for life in a country as dependent on foreign aid as Afghanistan. He would prefer to go to Turkmenistan, but UNHCR says that the former Soviet republic is not accepting its ethnic brethren.

"Leave," decided Noor, a teacher of English who is preparing to go because of the closure of the camp school. He learned English two decades ago in a program run by International



Rescue Committee (we have been [working in Pakistan for 28 years](#)). Noor hopes that many other Afghans will return with their children, because then he could continue his job as a teacher. Likewise, his father-in-law could continue as imam if the congregation returned.

"Stay," declares a 67-year-old ethnic Pashtun who did not authorize me to use his name. He is from the northern Jawzjan province and came to Pakistan 29 years ago. He was a [freedom fighter against the Soviet invasion](#), but he brought his family to the safety of this Pakistani camp while he commanded 2,500 mujahideen. Among his former adversaries in the complicated Afghan wars were some who now hold high positions in the government of [President Hamid Karzai](#). For this Pashtun, a return to Afghanistan is too risky, so he is insistent that he is not going back: "I will stay in the camp until the bulldozers come."

But can an old man—even a former mujahideen—stand up to a bulldozer?

The road to UNHCR's repatriation center in Peshawar—where I met those who are being "de-registered" after voting with their feet to leave—follows the enormous terrain that is all that remains of the [Kacha Garhi camp](#). Kacha Garhi once hosted 65,000 Afghan refugees, but it was razed to the ground by bulldozers last July. It is a dreadful reminder that camps in Pakistan [eventually close](#), whether or not Afghanistan is ready to receive the refugees. Now the only sign that Afghans lived on this leveled field for decades is a grim one: Peshawar's coffin producers have chosen to showcase their offerings by the side of the road. The caskets that line the side of the road are sold to departing Afghans who want to take the remains of their ancestors with them.

Outside the repatriation center, we accompanied the de-mining technician to his truck, which was loaded high with everything he could take from his house: beams, window frames, refrigerator, washing machine, beds, bedding, and the entire family mounted on top, women covered by blue burqas, children in their best clothes. My colleague told me that some refugees from Jalozai dismantled their homes themselves, rather than let the bulldozers do it, so that they can salvage the most precious parts of the mud house, namely, the beams. Pointing to the back of the truck, where battered logs were neatly stacked, she made a disarming *lapsus linguae*: "See? They take with them all their dreams."

Indeed they do.

## dvd extras

### Say It Ain't So, Jose

The remarkable pertinence of two pre-steroid-era classics: *Bull Durham* and *Eight Men Out*.

By Matthew McGough

Tuesday, April 22, 2008, at 8:00 AM ET

The indelible memory of the 1988 baseball season will always be the [storybook home run](#) hit by limping Dodgers pinch hitter Kirk Gibson to win the opening game of that October's World Series. It's a moment that ranks among the greatest in baseball history. For very different reasons, fans are also unlikely to forget the muscle-bound Oakland A's right fielder who watched the ball sail over his head into the Dodger Stadium bleachers. Jose Canseco hit .307 with 42 home runs and 142 RBIs that season, good enough to win the American League MVP award. In his eponymous report, Sen. George Mitchell unsurprisingly identified 1988 as the first marred by "public speculation" about a player's use of steroids.

With regard to baseball movies, though, 1988 has a far less ambiguous legacy. Two of the best ever made—Ron Shelton's *Bull Durham* and John Sayles' *Eight Men Out*—were released that year, and both films have just been rereleased on DVD in 20<sup>th</sup>-anniversary editions. Neither Shelton nor Sayles could have anticipated that baseball was on the cusp of a new era. Yet watching both movies today, it's hard to ignore how strikingly they foreshadow, and illuminate, the protracted crisis that was about to hit the sport.

*Eight Men Out* offers the more obvious parallels. The film depicts baseball's seminal scandal, the true story of how eight members of the Chicago White Sox conspired to throw the 1919 World Series. Sayles' stellar ensemble cast—including John Cusack, David Strathairn, and Charlie Sheen, among others—all make for more than credible ballplayers. It's a testament to the quality of the actors, but also to the fact that in 1919—indeed, as recently as 20 years ago—most professional baseball players did not resemble someone minding the door of a Las Vegas nightclub.

Sayles meticulously reconstructs Jazz Age Chicago, a milieu in which gamblers and ballplayers freely associated. Together with the relentlessly tightfisted tactics of White Sox owner Charles Comiskey, it was a moment ripe for a fix. Sayles takes great care to render the players' various motives, many sympathetic, for participating in the conspiracy. Eddie Cicotte hoped to use the money to send his two daughters to private school; Shoeless Joe Jackson was an illiterate Southerner, desperate to fit in. Buck Weaver's .324 batting average and flawless fielding in the series suggest he in fact played to win.

In the wake of the scandal, though, no one but the players is inclined to acknowledge degrees of culpability among them. The

eight are indicted and tried as a group, and though acquitted of criminal wrongdoing, they are issued identical lifetime bans by the newly appointed commissioner of baseball. Sayles knows, if "the Black Sox" did not, that they would never shake off the ignominious nickname they were given by the press. Nearly a hundred years later, it is still how they are collectively remembered. Jason Giambi and Andy Pettitte, two steroid-implicated players big enough to admit they did wrong, may yet one day reappear as sympathetic characters in a millennium-era baseball movie. The fate of the Black Sox, however, suggests their careers will be defined not by their statistics or regret, but by what they share in common with the other players named in the Mitchell Report.

The year 1919, like 1988, was a transitional moment for baseball. It was the end of the [dead-ball era](#), and the last days of the legal spitball. *Eight Men Out* captures this air of change in a scene between veteran pitcher Eddie Cicotte (Strathairn) and legendary sportswriter Ring Lardner (played by Sayles himself). Lardner tosses Cicotte a "ball they're thinking of using next year. It's wound tighter." Between the new balls—and the new bans on tampering with them—Lardner warns him that "things will be tough for pitchers." Cicotte shrugs and tosses the ball back. "Things are always tough for pitchers," he replies. If only they knew what lay ahead.

Though it's ostensibly set in the late-'80s, *Bull Durham* today feels nearly as much of a period piece as *Eight Men Out*. This is not to say the movie hasn't aged well—it has. It feels evocative of a bygone era because it's impossible, after the last 20 years of baseball history, to consider the film's central theme without thinking of steroids.

*Bull Durham* isn't as baldly sentimental as *Field of Dreams* or *The Natural*, two other standout baseball movies released during the genre's mid- to late-1980s heyday. But the minor league ballplayers at the heart of the movie are beloved baseball archetypes, as familiar today as at any point in the game's history. To borrow Shelton's shorthand, pitching prospect "Nuke" LaLoosh (a baby-faced Tim Robbins) is the rookie "with a million dollar arm and a five cent head," while journeyman catcher Crash Davis (Kevin Costner) is "the player to be named later." In exchange for helping Nuke reach the next rung of the minors, Crash is given the chance to keep getting paid to play baseball. By this point in his long career, Crash estimates that "all my limbs put together are worth seven cents a pound," but the revelation that he once had a brief stint in the majors leaves his younger teammates awed. Toward the end of the film, Crash becomes the all-time career leader for minor league home runs, a bittersweet record if there ever was one.

Crash knows from experience that the only thing harder than making it to "the show" is staying there. Talent is of course the most important element of success, but as Crash and baseball muse Annie Savoy (Susan Sarandon) try to drum into Nuke's

head, it's hardly the only one. Nuke won't reach the majors on the strength of having memorized bland platitudes to feed reporters, or by wearing fungus-free shower shoes, but lesser failings have proven the difference between the proverbial cup of coffee and a big league career.

Baseball has always been a game of inches, as Crash's sermon on the capriciousness of hitting .300 lays bare:

Of course, as we've learned since *Bull Durham* was released, a bit more brute strength—enough to add a few more feet to a few warning-track fly outs—can't hurt your chances either.

According to the *Mitchell Report*, when baseball first tested minor league players for steroids in 2001, 9 percent of the tests came back positive. Some of those players surely made it to the majors, where they encountered veteran teammates as desperate to hold onto a roster spot as the AAA guys were to seize one. Retired Phillies outfielder Doug Glanville recently wrote in an [op-ed](#) for the *New York Times* about "the moment when a player is faced with the choice between aging naturally or aging artificially." Glanville points to the brevity of most major league careers, combined with the relentless pressure from younger competition, to explain the temptation of steroids to veterans desperate to mitigate the physical toll of another long baseball season. Given his own career trajectory, Crash would have related to both camps: those on the verge of making it, and those trying to hang on for one more year.

It's hard to imagine Crash Davis, so testily protective of the game, resorting to steroids. But it's even harder to imagine a player in the steroid era hitting 247 home runs in the minors and never wondering what else he might do to get himself over the hump. In one of *Bull Durham*'s most memorable scenes, Crash delivers an [impassioned creed](#) advocating, among other things, a constitutional amendment to outlaw AstroTurf and the designated hitter. A condemnation of steroids would seem a logical third tenet, but the topic doesn't come up, in his speech or anywhere else in the movie.

Had Shelton written the screenplay just a few years later, the omission might have been glaring. Instead, its absence feels refreshing, a reminder that it wasn't always normal for fans to harbor suspicions about who might have taken a shortcut on their way to the bigs. Sadly, the question that hangs over the waning days of the Steroid Era—What would have transpired in the last 20 years of baseball, if not for steroids?—will remain as unanswerable as how Shoeless Joe Jackson would have hit in the first year of the live-ball era.

## election scorecard Looking Ahead

With Pennsylvania behind us, the focus shifts to Indiana and North Carolina.  
By Chadwick Matlin

Tuesday, April 22, 2008, at 10:06 PM ET

Now that Pennsylvania is behind us, the Democratic candidates will move on to the next big prizes on the schedule: North Carolina and Indiana. Both states go to the polls on May 6, and they're the only states remaining with more than 55 pledged delegates available—North Carolina has 115 and Indiana has 72. (Pennsylvania had 158.)

Thus far, Obama's lead in North Carolina is the only decisive polling trend in the next two states. [Pollster.com's North Carolina average](#) shows Obama ahead by nearly 20 points. The site's [compilation of Indiana's sparse polling](#) shows a mixed bag for the two candidates—in some polls Obama is ahead; in others Clinton leads.

After tonight, though, those numbers may change. As usual, we'll just have to wait and see.

*Election Scorecard uses data supplied by Mark Blumenthal and Charles Franklin at [Pollster.com](#).*

Delegates at stake:

Democrats	Republicans
Total delegates: 4,049 Total delegates needed to win: 2,025	Total delegates: 2,380 Total delegates needed to win: 1,191
Delegates won by each candidate: Obama: 1,626; Clinton: 1,486	Delegates won by each candidate: McCain: 1,325; Huckabee (out): 267; Paul: 16
<i>Source: CNN</i>	<i>Source: CNN</i>

Want more **Slate** election coverage? Check out [Map the Candidates](#), [Political Futures](#), [Trailhead](#), [XX Factor](#), and our [Campaign Junkie](#) page!

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## explainer Credit Card Numbers for Sale

How much does a Visa or MasterCard number go for these days?

By Jacob Leibenluft

Thursday, April 24, 2008, at 6:18 PM ET

Security experts at the InfoSecurity Europe conference are drawing attention to "data supermarkets" that sell stolen credit card numbers for a fixed price. According to [a BBC story](#), "credit card details are cheap" on the black market while "the logfiles of big companies can go for up to \$300." How much is my credit card number worth on the Internet?

As little as a few cents. Reliable statistics about data theft are [notoriously hard to come by](#), and reports of cheap cards for sale are [nothing new](#). Researchers who track the Internet Relay Chat servers where this sort of business is often done, however, are reporting that the lowest advertised prices of credit card numbers has been falling during the past two years. Symantec—a firm that sells security software to both consumers and businesses—[reported earlier this month](#) that credit card numbers were now selling for anywhere between 40 cents and \$20. (Credit cards from Europe or smaller card companies typically cost up to twice as much as standard-issue American numbers, presumably due to their relative scarcity within the market.) By comparison, Symantec researchers found bank account numbers going for anywhere from \$10 to \$1,000, and "full identities"—which include date of birth, address, and social security and telephone numbers—selling for between \$1 and \$15 a pop.

How many card numbers are up for sale at a given time? A group of academics [found](#) (PDF) that in a set of IRC channels they were able to access in 2006, 402 valid card numbers were appearing a day simply as teasers to attract new business. (The researchers couldn't tell, of course, if the cards were actually used or whether the linked accounts were active.)

The demand for very basic credit card information appears to be shrinking—in large part because those data are often not very valuable. Credit card companies foot most of the bill when your card number is pilfered: By law, a consumer is [liable for only \\$50](#) when a stolen card is used, and most companies [waive even that](#). As a result, the companies have stepped up their efforts to cut down on fraud, reducing the potential benefit from accessing a stolen card number. As opposed to bank accounts, for instance,

it is far more difficult to use credit cards to quickly (and anonymously) take out cash before an account is shut off.

In addition, the market for stolen data has become segmented. The available statistics on the price of pilfered data is based on information found [on public channels](#). More sophisticated data likely sells at higher prices in more restricted venues. Simple credit card numbers are often sold in bulk—Symantec found sales of 500 for \$200—while more specialized products go for a good deal more. The big money now appears to be in a host of value-added services, as more sophisticated criminals have gotten in the business of validating data, compiling more complete dossiers of information or selling "[bots](#)" that allow the buyer to collect data himself. The more expensive credit card numbers have often been field-tested already, with a seller placing a small charge on the account to see whether it goes through and if the owner detects any fraud. And a file that includes passwords, the answer to a user's security questions, and his mother's maiden name—along with the credit card data—might go for a [few hundred dollars](#).

Got a question about today's news? [Ask the Explainer](#).

*Explainer thanks [Alessandro Acquisti](#) and [Jason Franklin](#) of Carnegie Mellon University, [L. Jean Camp](#) of Indiana University, [Don Jackson](#) of SecureWorks, and [Dean Turner](#) of Symantec.*

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## explainer

### How To Spot a Persian Prostitute

Streetwalkers in chadors.

By Juliet Lapidos

Wednesday, April 23, 2008, at 6:53 PM ET

Tehran's former police chief [Reza Zarei attempted suicide in prison](#) yesterday, a month after being arrested for consorting with six naked women in a brothel. In the aftermath of the scandal, the [Times](#), the [Associated Press](#), and the [BBC](#) all reported that prostitutes are becoming more visible on Iranian streets. Given the Islamic dress code, how do Persian prostitutes signal their trade?

Location, location, location. In the 1970s, Bostonians looking for a proverbial good time went to the "[Combat Zone](#)" and New Yorkers flocked to 42<sup>nd</sup> Street; in contemporary Iran, the holy city of [Qom](#) is known (unofficially) as a place of "both pilgrimage and pleasure." There, prostitutes wearing veils and even [chadors](#) mill about temples or sit together in public courtyards where men can inspect them. Sometimes a male go-between offers "introductions," at which point the prostitutes

pull aside their headgear so the potential client can get a glimpse, but the whole process is fairly subtle. For an outsider, it's difficult to pick a street girl out of a crowd.

Qom may have become a prostitution hot spot due to the abundance of shrines. Young female runaways with no shelter come to the city knowing they can take refuge at holy sites by sleeping in rooms intended for pilgrims. They have no way of making a living, so after awhile they get involved with the sex trade. The city's young theological students and transient tourists form the main clientele.

Of course, Qom isn't the only place in Iran where prostitutes walk the streets. Back in 2002, the Iranian newspaper [Entekhab](#) estimated that there were nearly 85,000 prostitutes in Tehran alone. In that city, and especially in nearby suburbs, there are neighborhoods where heavily made-up prostitutes in traditional garb stand idly at traffic circles. Prospective customers drive by slowly to check out the human wares, then make a deal. The visual difference between an ordinary citizen wearing makeup who happens to be standing alone and an actual prostitute is, again, quite subtle. Apparently, mistakes are not uncommon.

The penalties for prostitution are severe—ranging from whipping to execution. But there's a loophole in Islamic law called [sigheh](#), or temporary marriage. According to Shiite interpretation, a man and a woman may enter an impermanent partnership with a preset expiration date. There's no legally required minimum duration (a day, a week, anything goes) and no need for official witnesses—unless the woman is a virgin, in which case she needs the consent of her legal guardian. An Iranian who's wary of arrest can simply escort a prostitute to a registry, obtain a temporary contract from a Muslim cleric, and then legally satisfy his sexual needs.

Got a question about today's news? [Ask the Explainer](#).

*Explainer thanks [Camelia Entekhabi-Fard](#) and [Barbara Slavin](#). Thanks also to reader [Alice Clapman](#) for asking the question.*

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## explainer

### Fat Soldiers

What's the Army's policy on overweight recruits?

By Jacob Leibenluft

Tuesday, April 22, 2008, at 6:54 PM ET

In an effort to meet its recruitment targets, the Army has begun granting [more waivers](#) to people who would otherwise be ineligible to serve—including overweight recruits. What's the Army policy on fat people?



They're not particularly welcome. The Army's basic recruitment standard is linked to a candidate's body-fat percentage, [measured](#) (PDF) by an equation involving height and the circumferences of the abdomen, neck, and—for women—hips. If they're 27 years old or younger, men must have a body-fat percentage below 26 percent, while women must be below 32 percent.

Typically, however, recruits are first judged against a table that lists an appropriate weight for any given height. The upper limits on the Army's weight table are slightly more lenient than the [definition](#) of "overweight" provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: For example, a 21-year-old male recruit who is 5 foot 10 and weighs 190 pounds would be a bit overweight under CDC guidelines but not above the Army's weight maximum. (You can also be too skinny to be recruited—the [minimum body-mass index](#) (PDF) is 19.) If candidates pass muster according to the table, they don't need to go through a body-fat measurement.

Because of increasing obesity rates in the United States, the Army's standards now disqualify a large percentage of the population. A [study](#) conducted by Army researchers found that 27.1 percent of the 18-year-olds who applied to join the military in 2006 were overweight—up from 22.8 percent in 1993. Weight is by far the [most common](#) medical reason why potential recruits are rejected from serving. And while prospective enlistees can try to make weight before their official screening—often with the support of [eager recruiters](#)—the pool of eligible young adults remains smaller than the Army would like.

As a result, the Army has tried to find ways to admit recruits who fall outside the typical boundaries but are still likely to succeed in the service. In particular, the [Assessment of Recruit Motivation and Strength](#)—known as ARMS—has become a source of automatic waivers for recruits with a body-fat percentage up to 30 percent for men and 36 percent for women. The ARMS process requires participants to complete a five-minute modified "[Harvard step](#)" test—which involves stepping onto a low platform 120 times per minute. After that, applicants must do a certain number of pushups in one minute—at least 15 for men and four for women. Applicants who qualify through the ARMS test get a free pass on being overweight, but they do have to get themselves in shape within a year of entering active duty. Early [research](#) suggests that recruits who get ARMS waivers have attrition rates similar to enlistees who enter the Army without a waiver.

Once a recruit makes weight, he's expected to stay slim. At a minimum, Army personnel are required to take a physical-fitness test every six months, which includes a weight screening. If a soldier is above the [maximum body-fat percentage](#) (PDF) for his age, he must take part in a "weight control" program that includes a workout regimen and nutritional counseling. While under an "overweight flag," soldiers can't attend a professional military school, be promoted, or even [re-enlist](#).

And yes, you can eat yourself out of the Army: If you don't eventually make satisfactory progress after being placed in the weight-control program, a commander can initiate "separation proceedings" leading to an eventual discharge.

Got a question about today's news? [Ask the Explainer](#).

*Explainer thanks Beth Asch of the RAND Corp., Maj. Nathan Banks of the U.S. Army, and Douglas Smith of the Army Recruiting Command.*

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## family

### I Left My Son in San Francisco

Learning to quash my alpha-mother tendencies and let my kid grow up.

By Bonnie Goldstein

Thursday, April 24, 2008, at 4:13 PM ET

My baby recently left home. He's 19 and launching his life in an age-appropriate way: subsidized by his parents, at school in a distant city, directing himself toward self-sufficiency and maturity. Nevertheless, the day his move became effective, I felt like I'd left him alone in the woods with no pebbles. This tender son was born 16 years after his big sister. She was learning quadratic equations as he was learning how to hold a spoon. When either child faltered, I'd try to help: "Here, let me."

My daughter, now an adult, lives in New York, far from our kitchen table in Washington, D.C., a circumstance to which we both eventually adjusted. But when Nate moved to San Francisco in January, taking all the worldly possessions he could fit in a suitcase (including his apparently indispensable Xbox), I was a wreck. This despite the fact I went with him to help him acclimate. With his laptop's browser bookmarked to Bay Area Craigslist, he acquired a MUNI bus schedule, a BART diagram, and a large folding map of the seven-mile peninsula. We studied neighborhoods while bunking temporarily in the garage of family friends in the Richmond district.

On my last day there, I watched him fill out his first rental application for a small low-ceilinged room on San Benito, walking distance from college. The Chinese man who was "helping the landlady" had given us a form so foreign to Nate it could have been written in characters. I resisted saying, "Here, let me."

I have been working on curbing my rather overbearing alpha-mother tendencies. During Nate's final year of high school, I impersonated him online, filling out and submitting 11 versions of the Common Application for undergraduate admission. The guidance counselor at his private school told parents such



"clerical" support was expected. It became my full-time job. Nate was apathetic about college applications, even with (or maybe because of) such competent staffing. High school barely engaged him. His assignments were often late or incomplete.

"Forget California," the college adviser told him, dismissing Nate's only tentative regional preference. "The U.C. system considers only your grades." The good news: His SAT scores were good, "especially that 760 in math." He should "concentrate" on engineering programs, she counseled. Although Nate loved Legos and had a knack for calculus, I was not convinced those talents should determine a career choice. He was also intrigued by human behavior and was a whiz at those logic puzzles you find on the LSAT. Nate's best friend, more certain of his passions, was planning to be an architect, however, so the adviser's suggestion of a mechanical major took hold. *OK, I'll be an engineer*, Nate seemed to say, *glad that's settled*, before losing interest altogether.

Nate's contribution to the college admissions process consisted of showing up for standardized tests and writing a personal composition at gunpoint: a list of sentences beginning with the word *I*. "I get lost in my own imagination; I love to engage in a heated, smart argument; I can't stand spiders; I can take a hit." As his clerical assistant, I helped reorder the declaratory statements and broke them into five-line groupings to resemble blank verse. The result was acceptance at the engineering departments of several universities, including the University of Wisconsin, which he chose.

His Madison dormitory room had loft beds, built-in desks, and a TV donated by his rural Wisconsin roommate, basic cable included. I came along for freshman move-in weekend. We drove between Home Depot and Target, systematically collecting housewares and snack food for the small dorm fridge. Only when I left that Monday did he whisper, "Don't go."

I did, though, and I didn't go back, either; too cold.

Nate's adjustment to post-secondary education was mixed. He liked his meal card. He did not enjoy advanced calculus across a cold, windy campus. He hunkered in, slept as much as he wanted, and found the cooking channel especially compelling. At Thanksgiving he reported midterms had gone fine. Returning to school after Christmas, he learned that his sedentary first semester had earned him academic probation and a 1.0 GPA. Despite vowing to shape up, Nate continued to miss multiple physics labs that spring. In May he was officially dropped. Restricted from registering for September, he could take "a semester to reflect" and return the following January.

He felt awful. Failure is painful. Also, he was sure we were going to disown him. His freshman experiment took a big chunk out of the college fund. But the fact is, he wasn't ready. He had not particularly wanted to grow up, he now admits. For a time,

he even hoped he was developmentally disabled, so he wouldn't have to.

His dad and I were "disappointed" and "concerned," of course, but completely on his side when the bottom fell out. Feeling guilty for not visiting him, I soothed, "We'll figure out what went wrong and relaunch."

He came home to an unscheduled intervention. While he'd been watching the food channel, his sister had had a spectacular season. We were hosting a garden party in her honor the same weekend he arrived with his duffel bag. "Get ready for every grown-up you've ever known," I warned him, "to ask how you did at school."

"Poorly," I overheard my straight-talking son admit to a guest, "but that was my fault. I didn't complete my assignments." As disturbing as the circumstances were, I was glad to have him back. I hadn't finished raising him yet.

"Let's set January as a goal," I offered. "You'll go back to Wisconsin or decide on some other approach." He returned to our basement: a cozy boy-cave close to the kitchen. He did yard work for friends, signed up for psychology classes at the local community college, and got a job busing tables for the bistro up the street.

By mid-December, Nate was making good tips and had a B-plus grade average. But he was not interested in returning to Wisconsin. He had no friends there, engineering was hard, the weather was freezing, and the prospect of a midyear housing search was daunting.

"I'd rather find a room on a beach," he confessed.

I suggested applying to another four-year university for the following autumn. He was welcome to remain in the boy-cave till fall. "I'm not doing that," he insisted. "I love you guys, but I've gotta get out of here." It was the most independent thing I ever heard come out of his mouth.

"In that case," I suggested, "go to community college somewhere you want to live."

*Hmm*, he wondered. "Do they have them in California?"

The very next day, he registered online for spring semester at City College of San Francisco. By the New Year, he was filling out the San Benito rental's questionnaire. Where the form asked for "occupation," I told him to write *student* and watched as he used a pencil "so I can erase." The landlady was set to approve him when another applicant offered \$100 a month more. Such experiences teach you how to compete. As consolation, she e-

mailed about a vacancy coming up soon in a "better neighborhood."

I left him with his bus schedule to start classes (psychology, sociology, and philosophy—no math). As he haphazardly carried on the rental hunt, our friends in the Richmond district wondered how long he'd be staying. At my urging, he contacted the landlady from the San Benito apartment. She was already considering someone for her place in the "better neighborhood" but agreed to show it to him. The Victorian house had a second-floor bedroom overlooking Golden Gate Park. Nate uncharacteristically called me the moment he saw it. "Mom, I want this."

The competition, a buddy of another resident in the house, had "a little bit priority," the landlady said, but Nate doggedly persuaded her of his own good qualities: He is well-mannered. He won't be having parties. His parents will pay by direct deposit. To his own amazement, my boy closed the deal. The following weekend, he moved out of our friends' garage to his own 300-square-foot home with hardwood floors and a working fireplace. Being 6 feet 3 inches, he especially loves the 14-foot ceilings. As a practical matter, the hearth perfectly accommodates his Xbox.

I'd been hammering Nate with my personal list of essential maturity skills before he left home. One must be able to *make decisions, develop relationships, understand transactions, show up consistently, communicate clearly*, I droned while making him double recipes of butterscotch pudding. On his own, he does not e-mail and rarely calls me. I tried to insist he check daily for my electronic correspondence, helpfully providing a list of cyber cafes in his neighborhood. "There are physical limitations which may prevent me from fulfilling your rules," he e-mailed politely. "I will make them personal goals to be accomplished." When I wanted to go help him "settle in," he asked me to wait "until I get things the way I want them." *Don't come.*

I pay for his groceries through a Visa account, every bit as functional as the freshman meal card. Lately, he's not that happy with my clerical performance. I didn't decipher my bank's electronic deposit feature in time for his first rent installment, so I sent the landlady's check to his address via the post office. "Look for it in the common mail pile," I alerted him, "so you can make sure she gets it." Nate, concerned the money would be lost and surprised his competent mother might cause him to renege on his obligation, got a little perturbed. He mocked me, "That's like *you* saying, 'I didn't complete the assignment!'"

From my view, Nate is a kid who still requires clerical and financial assistance, but he's been making himself a "habit list," hoping to change that. "If you do something every day for a 30 days," he says, it becomes "routine." Though not yet possessed of a five-year plan, Nate is at last intent on completing his tasks, one assignment at a time. My difficult job will be to let him.

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## fighting words

### Mandela Envy

Is Robert Mugabe's lawless misrule founded in jealousy?

By Christopher Hitchens

Monday, April 21, 2008, at 11:55 AM ET

The stirring news—that the dockworkers of Durban, South Africa, had [refused to unload a shipload of Chinese weapons](#) ordered by the lawless government of Zimbabwe—made me remember very piercingly how good it sometimes felt to be a socialist. Here's a clear-cut case of solidarity and internationalism in which the laboring class of one country affirms the rights—"concretely" affirms the rights, as we used to say—of its brothers and sisters in another country. In doing so, it improves the chances of democracy worldwide. This is how socialism began, with Karl Marx and his allies organizing a boycott of Confederate slave-harvested cotton during the American Civil War, and however often a thieving megalomaniac like Robert Mugabe claims to be a socialist, there are still brave and honest workers who, by contemptuously folding their arms, can deny him the sinews of oppression.

This principled decision by the South African unions is also clarifying in another way. It helps explain the long, cowardly ambiguity of the post-Mandela South African regime in respect to Zimbabwe, and it also helps explain why this shameful accommodation might at long last be drawing to a close.

As it happened, Zimbabwe became independent—and free of white settler rule—more than a decade before South Africa did. Among other things, this sequence of development threw into sharp relief the distinction between the Zimbabwe African National Union (Robert Mugabe's vaunted ZANU-PF or Patriotic Front) and the Zimbabwe African People's Union, or ZAPU, which had been led by veteran Joshua Nkomo. Not only did this division reflect the ethnic makeup of Zimbabwe as between the majority Shona and the minority Matabele, respectively. It also involved the Russo-Chinese split in the world Communist movement, with Nkomo being backed by Moscow and Mugabe by Beijing. The same split was evident in the larger South African liberation movement, though in that case Nelson Mandela's African National Congress, with its heavy Communist Party influence, effectively dwarfed the renegade Maoist forces of the Pan Africanist Congress, which stood for an unreconstructed form of blacks-only Stalinism and which was to be obliterated in the first South African elections.

I can remember South African President Thabo Mbeki pretty well from that tense transitional time between the end of Ian Smith's Rhodesia and the end of apartheid. He was then a rising star of the ANC, and his father, Govan Mbeki, was one of

Mandela's most famous long-term comrades in the quarter-century they all spent in Robben Island prison. (Govan was also a senior member of the South African Communist Party.) Thabo had come to Zimbabwe to be as close to the dramatic developments across the frontier as he could manage. But the life of an ANC official in Robert Mugabe's Harare was not an easy one. "The regime openly prefers the PAC," he told me, "and they treat us with contempt." At the time, also, supporters of Joshua Nkomo, an old friend of the ANC, were going in fear of their lives as Mugabe's North Korean-trained special forces vengefully roamed Matabeleland.

So all this invites a question: Knowing what they knew about his primitive politics and even more primitive methods, why did the leaders of the ANC continue to tolerate Mugabe when they themselves succeeded in coming to power democratically in the post-apartheid state? The answers are both illuminating and depressing. At one point, in desperation, Nkomo had actually sought white South African help against Mugabe, which meant that he had betrayed his comrades in the ANC and isolated himself in Zimbabwe. Then again, Mugabe had pretended to be a great "conciliator" à la Mandela, at least in the early days of his rule, making warm gestures toward white and Asian investors. So there was no special need to stress ancient intraparty grievances. There is also considerable pressure within the African Union not to ostracize member governments who make themselves unpopular on the world stage. It's this lowest-common-denominator, not-in-front-of-the-goyim instinct that at one point made Idi Amin the chairman of the A.U.—or, rather, of that organization's predecessor—and that more recently allowed the disgusting Omar al-Bashir of Sudan to be the host of the A.U. summit. Still, one had the right to expect that the party of Mandela would have standards that were a bit more elevated than that.

Since meeting Mugabe in 1977 in exile, and again in 1979 and later, I must have sat through several dozen "what went wrong" discussions. There are those who say that his sadism and corruption and self-destructive paranoia are a delayed result of his own decade of incarceration. There are those who attribute it to the death of his lovely Ghanaian wife, Sally, in 1992 (after which, it must be admitted, he never was the same). There are those who speculate that his obsession with homosexuality and vice—which was one of the first symptoms of his breakdown—is an aspect of his old-school missionary Catholicism. Then, of course, there were all those years of fervent admiration for the Cultural Revolution in China, and for the even more purist system of Kim Il-Sung and Kim Jong-il. None of these are, or were, particularly good signs. But I have a theory of my very own: I believe that Mugabe was also driven into a permanent rage by the adulation heaped internationally on Nelson Mandela, an accolade of praise and recognition that he felt was more properly due to himself. And, harboring this grievance, he decided to denude his own unhappy country of anything that might remind anybody of Mandela's legacy.

In doing this, he had only to dust off the old "one settler, one bullet" propaganda of the past. But it has been that very thing, finally, that has cost him some South African support. The leader of the Zimbabwean opposition, Morgan Tsvangirai, is a celebrated labor-union man. The South African unions have a long record of allegiance to old-line communism, highly disdainful of Maoist adventures and Chinese meddling. China may now be a capitalist dictatorship and Mugabe a capitalist dictator, but these are not the least of history's ironies if it's an old-style red-labor-union tactic that begins to bring Mugabe down.

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## food

### The Myth of the 30-Minute Meal

Gordon Ramsay says he can make you a more efficient cook. Don't believe him.

By Laura Shapiro

Wednesday, April 23, 2008, at 7:13 AM ET

By day, he's a famously rambunctious and foul-mouthed restaurant chef; by night, he's pretty much the same. But somehow Gordon Ramsay finds the time to do quick, healthy, delicious home cooking for his family. Just check out the photographs in his new book, [Gordon Ramsay's Fast Food](#), which is dedicated to making dinner in 30 minutes or less. Here he is, a scruffy Brit in a T-shirt, intently focused on chopping pretty strips of something red and yellow. A few pages later, he's scruffy in a different T-shirt but again completely absorbed, this time going hard at an apple with a corer. Now he's wielding a big pepper grinder, now he's pounding away with a mortar and pestle, and now he's fussing with something we can't quite see, standing at the stove over a big pot. But how does he fit all this into his life? The guy runs high-end, award-winning restaurants around the world like Restaurant Gordon Ramsay in London and Gordon Ramsay au Trianon at Versailles, he stars in TV cooking shows, he writes books, he consults with food companies, he's got a line of Royal Doulton dishes and ovenware—and he still whips out beef fajitas, crab spring rolls, tandoori spiced halibut, and poached figs for his wife, Tana, and their four kids. "Don't skip meals or resort to junk food, however busy you are," he pleads earnestly. In other words, if he manages to cook every night, so can you; and right here in *Fast Food* are all his secrets.

Well, maybe not all his secrets. I'm thinking of one that popped out inadvertently in his recent memoir, [Roasting in Hell's Kitchen](#). There he explains that his huge house in Wandsworth, a neighborhood in southwest London, has one kitchen in the basement for his wife and another on the floor above for him. Her kitchen has standard equipment. His kitchen cost half a million pounds and is used for photographing his books and shooting his TV shows. As for family fajita night, with Dad at

the stove—"You won't find me faffing about in the kitchen," he snaps. (*To faff* is a Britishism meaning to dither or waste time.) "At home, Tana cooks in the downstairs kitchen or we get takeaway, or we grill something simple."

To his British fans, of course, any blips in the imagery surrounding their favorite chef are irrelevant. The moment *Gordon Ramsay's Fast Food* was published in the United Kingdom last spring, it became a best-seller, praised for its fresh, accessible recipes. But while Ramsay has a devoted following on this side of the Atlantic, too, it's a bit unclear whether the recipes will get a similar welcome here. I'm perfectly willing to believe that the folks who invented [toad-in-the-hole](#) are now serving their kids poached duck eggs with anchovy fingers, but it's hard to picture an American family breaking into glad cries at the sight of the same meal. Ditto the supper featuring warm blood sausage, though I'd like to be there when Mom offers it to the field hockey team. Other recipes call for Charlotte potatoes, *pata negra* ham, and fresh gooseberries, all of which your staff can easily round up for you—that's how Ramsay gets them—but if you don't live near one of the six remaining butchers in the United States, good luck with the lamb rumps and the oven-ready quails. "Recipes give both standard American measures and metric measures," says a helpful note. Not quite. Many ingredients are listed only by weight—9 ounces of sliced mushrooms—as if Americans kept scales in the kitchen the way Europeans do.

My guess is that Ramsay and his publisher made no effort to translate this book into Americanese because they assumed his fans here wouldn't dream of trying to make these recipes. And they're probably right. Armchair cooks in this country will turn the pages slowly, admiring the full-color tomato tart, the chunks of charred tuna nestled on glowing lettuce leaves, and the linguini that falls on the plate in attractive tangles. Perhaps they'll warm to Ramsay's heartfelt declaration, "For me, cooking and eating seasonally is a joy," though they may wonder briefly how he's sourcing his mangoes and lychees. Never mind, this is a very forgiving crowd. Ramsay's achievement in this genre is that he's come up with a kind of hologram. Tilt the book one way and you get beat-the-clock cooking for the British; tilt it another way and you find a sumptuous fantasy for Americans.

Fantasy has always played a big part in beat-the-clock cookbooks; in fact, the category relies on it, as Ramsay's book makes clear. Despite the shopping lists, the step-by-step directions, the time-saving tips, and the authors who insist that this is exactly how they cook at home, there's little that reflects the real world in such books. Like those gigantic, glossy tomes with titles like *My Kitchen in the Wine Country* or *Tuscany at Table*, the quick-cook books are wish books. They're cheaper, friendlier, and far more portable than their \$75 siblings, but they're wish books all the same. Open a quick-cook book and you're transported—not to some Provencal dreamscape but to your own kitchen. Why, that's you at the counter, cheerfully

putting together a charming meal for the family while your children set the table. You can practically see them storing up those all-important food memories that will accompany them through life like a St. Christopher medal.

If you're an ordinary, sometimes bumbling home cook, it's hard to resist a book that promises to impose factorylike precision on a chore that is by nature messy and unpredictable. Hence the popularity of stopwatch cuisine, which used to be known as "practical" or "simple" cookery and is now designated by sheer speed: *The 60-Minute Gourmet*, *30-Minute Meals*, *29-Minute Meals*, *20-Minute Menus*, *Fresh 15-Minute Meals*, *10-Minute Cuisine*, *Rocco's 5-Minute Flavor*, *The Last-Minute Cookbook*. How do they do it? Look a little more closely at the advice they're offering. Mary Ann Esposito, author of *Ciao Italia Pronto! 30-Minute Recipes From an Italian Kitchen*, notes that she cleans four or five days' worth of lettuce at once, makes two lasagnas at a time and freezes one, and fixes tomorrow's vegetables while she's preparing today's. Pierre Franey, who launched the "60-Minute Gourmet" column in the *New York Times* in 1976, says it's awfully helpful to do a few things the night before, including mince the garlic, chop the onions, chop the parsley, clean and cube the potatoes, peel the carrots, core the peppers, set the table, uncork the wine, and put the cream in a pitcher. "Five minutes means 5 minutes," declares Rocco DiSpirito in *Rocco's 5 Minute Flavor*, adding, "Prep time is not included in the 5 minutes, but I was careful to choose ingredients that require virtually no preparation." True—he uses plenty of cans and jars—but what about the three red onions to be cut into rings exactly 1/5 an inch thick? Rummage around too long for a ruler, and you're already 90 seconds into the recipe with nothing to show for it.

Take note: Cookbook writers are different from you and me, even the ones who look oh so domestic on their book covers. They're professionals, which means they're in the habit of working efficiently. Speed is part of their *batterie de cuisine*, just like sharp knives. And while they're constantly telling you the best way to chop an onion, or why you should always keep canned tomatoes around, the ones who write 15-minute recipes are never going to tell you the single most crucial thing about quick cooking, which is that 15-minute recipes are irrelevant. The only really useful shortcut in the kitchen is knowing how to cook. The others you'll invent while you're cooking.

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foreigners

## A Fading Signal

Radio Free Europe still exists—and it's more important than ever.

By Anne Applebaum

Monday, April 21, 2008, at 8:16 PM ET



"Radio Free Europe? Does that still exist?"

That was the question; the speaker was an Important Public Broadcaster visiting Europe for a few days last week. It wasn't a surprising query, as these things go, or an ignorant one. Not many other Americans know that [Radio Free Europe](#) still exists, so why should he?

Nevertheless, the query bothered me, because Radio Free Europe—the Cold War news service that was, for decades, the only source of independent information in Eastern Europe—does exist. In fact, it's as important as it ever was, at least in the 21 countries and 28 languages in which it is still often the only source of independent information: Persian for Iran, Arabic for Iraq, Dari and Pashto for Afghanistan, plus Turkmen, Azeri, Belarusian, Georgian, Chechen, Tajik, Albanian, Serbian, and Russian, among others. The fact that you haven't heard anyone mention RFE lately, let alone [the achievements of its Afghan journalists](#), who provide much of the news in much of that country, says more about the poverty of the American foreign-policy debate in general (and this election-year debate in particular) than almost anything else. In RFE, we have an American institution that is admired, even beloved, in many difficult parts of the world, and yet we are slowly, methodically starving it to death.

Reputation to the contrary, RFE is not American propaganda radio. It is better described as "surrogate radio": a broadcasting service that supplies local, national, and international news—in radio, Internet, and sometimes video form—in countries where other local news is weak or unavailable. Most of the programming is written by local journalists who follow local politics in the local languages. Many of them live in the countries they cover, sometimes at great risk. When the Newseum opened in Washington, D.C., last week, the names of four RFE journalists, all killed in the last two years, were already [inscribed on a plaque there](#): a Turkmen, two Iraqis, and an Uzbek. In the last year alone, RFE has dealt with staff kidnappings in Iraq and Afghanistan, disappearances in Turkmenistan, official harassment in Russia and Belarus, and blackmail from Iran.

Occasionally, RFE's journalists even have to be smuggled out of their home countries. But when this happens, they wind up in Prague, where, for anachronistic, post-Cold War-era reasons (President Vaclav Havel gave RFE a building there after 1989), the organization now has its headquarters. Once there, they can't go home; they can't get green cards; they don't speak Czech; and, now that the dollar has collapsed to a degree not fully appreciated in Washington, they can't support themselves, either. RFE, which at its peak received \$230 million in congressional funding, now gets \$75 million in rapidly devaluing currency. That money pays for transmitters, salaries, security, and anti-jamming technology, as well as programming and Internet

content in 28 languages. To put that in perspective, as RFE President Jeff Gedmin likes to say, \$75 million is also the price of four Apache helicopters.

Which is an apt comparison, since, if RFE vanishes, we may need a lot more helicopters to replace it. Many analysts—[our secretary of defense among them](#)—pay lip service nowadays to the need for "soft power," the nonmilitary initiatives and institutions that, once upon a time, helped us win "hearts and minds" in remote places, even when we wouldn't or couldn't send an army. Each of the presidential candidates has implicitly agreed, claiming that when he/she becomes president, foreign policy is going to be conducted differently, more diplomatically, and so on. But what does that entail? Will *diplomacy* mean we force Slovenia and Norway to send 17 more soldiers to Afghanistan? Or should *diplomacy* mean that we help the people who are trying to foster civilized public debate in Afghanistan as an alternative to warfare? When I was at the RFE office in Prague several weeks ago, the Afghans showed me the enormous, old-fashioned canvas mailbags that arrive every week from Afghanistan, full of letters thanking the presenters, offering arguments, making comments—and asking why there isn't more service, more coverage, more than 12 hours daily of Radio Free Afghanistan.

RFE has, it is true, a good number of admirers in Washington as well as a few constructive critics, usually people who wish it did more things better. What it does not have, however, is an advocate: someone, in Congress, in the White House, or on the campaign trail, who remembers that Americans have done "soft power" rather well in the past, that [the collapse of the dollar is more than a minor irritant for rich tourists](#), that with better transmitters we could reach more Iranians, and that we could easily swap a few helicopters for better-informed Afghans. *Yes* is the answer to the Important Public Broadcaster's question: Radio Free Europe still exists. But if no one remembers to support it, politically and financially, it won't exist for much longer.

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## **gabfest**

### **The Super-Hot Girlfriend Gabfest**

Listen to *Slate's* weekly politics show.

By Emily Bazelon, John Dickerson, and David Plotz  
Friday, April 25, 2008, at 10:14 AM ET

*Listen to the Political Gabfest for April 25 by clicking the arrow on the audio player below:*

*You can also download the program [here](#), or you can subscribe to the weekly Gabfest podcast feed in iTunes by clicking [here](#).*

On this week's show: why the Pennsylvania primary has left Democrats re-evaluating their infatuation with Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, how all three remaining presidential candidates are addressing the world food shortage, and why they all should stop talking about the alleged vaccine-autism connection.

Here are some links to items relating to this week's Gabfest:

John's take on the [Pennsylvania primary results](#)  
A *Slate V* [video of Emily and Dr. Sydney Spiesel](#) discussing vaccines and autism  
The "[Jefferson 1](#)" [channel](#) on YouTube

And you'll find our sister show, the Culture Gabfest, at its new home [here](#).

Posted by Andy Bowers on April 25 at 10:14 a.m.

**April 18, 2008**

*Listen to the Gabfest for April 18 by clicking the arrow on the audio player below:*

*You can also download the program [here](#), or you can subscribe to the weekly Gabfest podcast feed in iTunes by clicking [here](#).*

On this week's pre-Pennsylvania edition, Emily Bazelon, John Dickerson, and David Plotz discuss Wednesday's Clinton/Obama debate (and whether ABC should be ashamed of itself), John McCain's great week, and the Supreme Court's boost for the death penalty.

Here are links related to items mentioned in the show:

[John's take](#) on the ABC debate.  
Melinda Henneberger on [Obama's "bitter" remarks](#).  
*Slate V* imagines a [Hillary ad slamming Bruce Springsteen](#).

Posted by Andy Bowers on April 18 at 4:35 p.m.

**April 11, 2008**

*Listen to the Gabfest for April 11 by clicking the arrow on the audio player below:*

*You can also download the program [here](#), or you can subscribe to the weekly Gabfest podcast feed in iTunes by clicking [here](#).*

Emily Bazelon, John Dickerson, and David Plotz discuss the congressional testimony of Gen. David Petraeus, a political demotion and more polls on the campaign trail, and whether we should boycott the Olympics.

Here are links to some of the articles and other items mentioned in the show:

Gen. Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker [testified this week on Capitol Hill](#).

John, David, and Emily discuss a *New York Times* editorial on the [lack of an administration strategy](#) for dealing with Iran.

David comments on [news reports](#) concerning Iran's claims that it is installing 6,000 new centrifuges to enrich uranium.

Emily explains the "[status of forces](#)" agreement dealing with Iraq and how it is about to end.

The latest [polls show Barack Obama up](#) by as much as 10 points over Hillary Clinton.

National Public Radio had a [segment](#) on Thursday discussing the reaction of the Chinese government to protests over the Olympic torch.

Emily brings up an interesting *Slate* [piece](#) using game theory to explain dating.

David comments on the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Washington Post Magazine* article about noted violinist [Joshua Bell playing anonymously](#) in a D.C. Metro station.

John discusses an [ABC report](#) that links Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to administration discussions about "enhanced interrogation techniques."

The e-mail address for the Political Gabfest is [gabfest@slate.com](mailto:gabfest@slate.com). (E-mail may be quoted by name unless the writer stipulates otherwise.)

Posted by Dale Willman on April 11 at 11:47 a.m.

**April 9, 2008**

*Listen to Cultural Gabfest No. 5, with critics Stephen Metcalf, Dana Stevens, and Julia Turner by clicking the arrow on the audio player below:*

You can also download the program [here](#), or you can subscribe to the weekly Gabfest podcast feed in iTunes by clicking [here](#).

In this week's Cultural Gabfest, our critics discuss whether the latest *Vogue* cover is racist (or just the subject of misplaced outrage in the blogosphere), whether Hillary's tax return explodes the Clintons' middle-class image, and whether the new online sitcom *The Guild* is for nerds only.

Here are links to some of the articles and other items mentioned in the show:

[Vogue's "King Kong" cover](#)

[Slate's take on the Vogue cover](#)

John Lennon and Yoko Ono on the [cover of Rolling Stone](#), photographed by Annie Leibovitz

Hillary Clinton's [2007 tax return](#) (as disclosed by Hillary)

*The Guild*: [official show site](#), [YouTube channel](#)

[World of Warcraft](#)

[Quarterlife](#) (no longer) on NBC

[M. Ward and Zooey Deschanel](#)

[AC/DC](#)

[Am I That Name?](#) by Denise Riley

BBC Radio 4's [Start the Week](#)

Posted by Amanda Aronczyk on April 9 at 11:12 a.m.

## April 4, 2008

Listen to the [Political Gabfest for April 4](#) by clicking the arrow on the audio player below:

You can also download the program [here](#), or you can subscribe to the weekly Gabfest podcast feed in iTunes by clicking [here](#).

John Dickerson, David Plotz, and guest Will Saletan discuss the continuing battle in the Democratic presidential campaign, the speculation over who might be selected as John McCain's running mate, and the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Here are links to some of the articles and other items mentioned in the show:

Mark Blumenthal on [public opinion polls at the time of Ohio's Democratic presidential primary in March](#).

The [latest Quinnipiac poll](#) shows a tightening race between Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton in Pennsylvania.

Hillary [Clinton misspeaks](#) on Bosnia.

A recent [public opinion poll](#) by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press asks who is more patriotic—Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama.

Actor and former [Sen. Fred Thompson once ran for president](#).

John talks about the [Clinton campaign continuing to use the 3 a.m. crisis television ads](#).

[The Root](#) commemorates the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination.

John comments on an article by Jack White about American views on [whether the King assassination involved a conspiracy](#).

Will talks about [the Transportation Security Administration and nipple rings](#).

David discusses the story of a 7-year-old boy who has a school record saying he [sexually harassed a classmate](#).

The e-mail address for the Political Gabfest is [gabfest@slate.com](mailto:gabfest@slate.com). (E-mail may be quoted by name unless the writer stipulates otherwise.)

Posted by Dale Willman on April 4 at 11:30 a.m.

## March 28, 2008

Listen to the Gabfest for March 28 by clicking the arrow on the audio player below:

You can also download the program [here](#), or you can subscribe to the weekly Gabfest podcast feed in iTunes by clicking [here](#).

John Dickerson, Emily Bazelon, and guest Will Saletan gather in *Slate*'s Washington, D.C., studio to discuss whether Hillary Clinton has any chance of winning the Democratic nomination, how faulty memory hurts candidates on the campaign trail, and the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Viagra.

Here are links to some of the articles and other items mentioned in the show:

John on [Hillary Clinton's will to live](#)

Jeff Greenfield on [primary lessons](#)

Mickey Kaus on the first time Obama attended [the Rev.](#)

[Jeremiah Wright's church](#)

"Today's Blogs" on [Hillary misspeaking](#) about her trip to Bosnia

Emily recommends the film [Fifty Nude Women](#)

A [public opinion poll](#) finds that 22 percent of Democratic voters

nationwide say Hillary Clinton should drop out of the race, but 22 percent also say Barack Obama should drop out

Posted by Dale Willman on March 28 at 11:51 a.m.

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## green room Earth Chats

A series of online discussions with leading environmental advocates.  
Friday, April 25, 2008, at 11:26 AM ET

The [38<sup>th</sup> annual Earth Day](#) comes after an extraordinary year of environmental news. Polar bears seem on the verge of being [declared an endangered species](#). In October, the Nobel Peace Prize was [awarded to a panel of climate scientists](#). And, as of last night, George W. Bush seems to have [completed his reversal of course](#) on cutting carbon emissions.

Clearly, there's a lot to talk about. This week, *Slate* is hosting some of the world's most eminent environmental thinkers, leaders, and advocates, and inviting them to answer questions from our readers about what's happening to our world and what we can do about it.

Continue checking back throughout the week as we expand our schedule of chats:

### Monday

Read the [transcript](#) of our chat with conservative conservationist **Newt Gingrich**. After serving 20 years as a Republican congressman, Gingrich has devoted himself to a bipartisan "mainstream environmentalism," which he outlines in his 2007 book [A Contract With the Earth](#).

Read the [transcript](#) of our chat with author and advocate **Bill McKibben**, who has been writing books on environmentalism for almost 20 years. He's written a handbook on how to stop global warming and a treatise on the importance of having smaller families. In [Deep Economy](#), just out in paperback, McKibben lays out an economic policy that focuses on local communities, as opposed to unending "growth."

### Tuesday

Read the [transcript](#) of our chat with Academy Award-nominated actor and environmental activist **Edward Norton**. Norton is the host of *National Geographic's* [Strange Days on Planet Earth](#), which covers topics like climate change, overfishing, water pollution, and the quest for clean energy. He also helped start a program to provide low-income families in Los Angeles with solar-powered homes, and he has worked on promoting the development of green spaces in urban areas.

### Friday

[1:30 p.m. ET](#): Global-warming activist **Laurie David**. David was a producer of Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* and is the creator of environmentally themed programming for TBS and HBO. She also founded the [Stop Global Warming Virtual March](#) with Sen. John McCain and Robert F. Kennedy Jr., and blogs on environmental issues at the Huffington Post. Click [here](#) to ask your question.

### Also from Washingtonpost.com:

On [Friday at noon ET](#), Environmental Defense Fund president Fred Krupp will talk about the reinvention of energy.

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## green room The Carbon Olympics

Keeping track of the Olympic torch's carbon footprint—one leg at a time.  
By Chadwick Matlin  
Thursday, April 24, 2008, at 6:52 AM ET

The 2008 Olympic torch relay has not exactly inspired warm feelings of international cooperation, as in years past. Pro-Tibetan activists mounted protests [in Paris](#) and [London](#), and even managed to [force the extinguishing of the flame](#) on a few occasions. But in the long run, the torch could generate more pollution than political dissent. Its journey across the world (and back again) is leaving a historic trail of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Assuming the International Olympic Committee doesn't snuff out the relay in the face of mass protests—it says [that won't happen](#)—our calculations estimate that the entire trip will unfold over 50,000 miles in 20 countries. (Including a 31-city tour in mainland China, the entire thing will cover 85,000 miles.) [As Wired reports](#), the flame gets its own private plane, so those 50,000 miles of travel demand 270,000 gallons of jet fuel. (The torch's plane needs 5.4 gallons of fuel for every mile flown.) With every gallon of fuel burned, [23.88 pounds](#) of CO<sub>2</sub> [get pumped into the air](#), which means air travel alone will generously offer the environment 6,447,600 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub>. That's the equivalent weight of more than 1,000 Hummer H-2s.

To track the flame's slow assault on the atmosphere, we created a map that charts its total carbon emissions as it flies. (Find it below.) Through Thursday's stop in Canberra, the relay has traveled an estimated 40,875 miles, burned 220,725 gallons of jet fuel, and released 5,270,913 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub>. We'll be updating the map regularly over the next few weeks as the torch makes its way back to China. Click on the red lines between stops to see the impact of each leg of the trip on the environment.



[View Larger Map](#)

To put this in perspective, the average American leaves an annual carbon footprint of 42,000 to 44,000 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, according to the [United Nations](#). That means the Olympic torch will spew as much greenhouse gas during its international travels as 153 Americans do a year. Put another way, the four-month torch relay puts twice as much carbon in the atmosphere as you will over the course of your entire life.

The numbers get even more lopsided when you compare the torch with the average Chinese national. The flame's 50,000-mile journey has an annual carbon footprint equivalent to 624 Chinese citizens'. (Keep in mind that China [claims it's offering a green Olympics](#).)

The above calculations don't include the carbon emissions of the torch itself—nor [the lantern that keeps the official Olympic flame](#) lit 24/7. The torch—or rather, all [10 thousand to 15 thousand](#) torches—are fueled by propane, which puts out another 12.669 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> per gallon burned. We can't calculate the carbon footprint of the torch while it's being paraded around by Olympic heroes because neither the company that designed the torches nor the Beijing Olympic Committee answered our questions about how much propane was burned every hour.

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## green room

### Earth Chats: Edward Norton

On an interconnected globe, small daily actions matter—and can be changed.  
Tuesday, April 22, 2008, at 1:25 PM ET

*Slate* invited actor and activist Edward Norton, host of the National Geographic TV series [Strange Days on Planet Earth](#), to chat with readers on [Washingtonpost.com](#) about the changes to the earth's eco-systems and what to do about them. An unedited transcript of the chat follows. See the [schedule](#) of *Slate's* upcoming Earth Chats.

**Edward Norton:** Hello. Thanks for your interest. *Strange Days on Planet Earth* airs two new episodes tomorrow night (Wed) on PBS. We're all very excited about them and hope you'll tune in. I should start by saying that I think the spreading consciousness of environmental issues is very encouraging. It seems to me that it is starting to transcend traditional political agendas and be recognized for what it truly is...a challenge that engages all of us.

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**Boston, Mass.:** In light of the upcoming Olympics in Beijing, there has been significant media attention on China recently. Accelerated growth combined with a large population is causing growing concerns amongst environmentalists throughout the world. How can we respectfully reconcile China's right to develop with the need for environmental controls? How can we convince the Chinese that we are not against them, but instead that the nature of their development bears a direct effect on the health of the world.

**Edward Norton:** My father founded the Nature Conservancy's program in China, which is one of the most ambitious conservation management programs ever undertaken in terms of scale. He spent 7 years living and working in China and I supported his work and spent a lot of time over there. I think most people in the West would be surprised at how many people in China are focused on these exact questions and very concerned about them and working hard to advocate for sensible solutions. One significant positive shift is that the government has definitely started paying close attention to the warnings of its own scientists and stopped politicizing any science that was 'bad news'. In certain areas China actually seems capable of leapfrogging some of our own worst mistakes but in other areas, energy production especially, they are creating an infrastructure that will pollute horribly.

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**Brooklyn, N.Y.:** Can you give us one of the more compelling highlights from one of the episodes?

**Edward Norton:** I think that the investigation that ultimately linked declining sardine numbers to potentially catastrophic releases of methane gas (one of the worst greenhouse gases) from the ocean floor is just an amazing story. Like an episode of *CSI*.

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**Colorado Springs, Colo.:** First, I would like to thank the *Washington Post* for creating the Green Section. Finally, some ongoing action!

For Ed: why do we continue to produce mass quantities of items like plastic bags and plastic water bottles and plastics in general that are so destructive to the earth? How can we quickly strengthen the laws against such huge pollutants of all kinds? We are drowning in trash. Thank you.

**Edward Norton:** I've actually only recently become fully aware of the intense damage that plastic waste is doing, especially in the ocean ecosystems. I learned a lot about it working on the episodes in this series. It blew my mind. I just don't think most of us are aware how much of what we throw away ends up in the

ocean, for starters. Plastic bags are among the worst. The US is actually falling behind the curve on that score. China and many other countries have already banned the production and use of thin plastic bags. It's something I hope we follow suit on. Obviously plastics have served very important purposes and been incredibly convenient but as we begin to witness the long-term consequences of the chemical components leaching into our water and our bodies, we're going to be forced to look for alternatives to how we package goods and food. There is a lot of interesting product coming to market already. Bags and bottles and cups and such made of potato starch and other fully biodegradable materials. In some sense, plastic is more chemically complex. We ought to be able to simplify.

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**Washington, D.C.:** First, I have to say you are one of my favorite actors! The *25th Hour* was an amazing film and one of my favorites.

Now to my conservation question: I feel one limitation of the eco movement is a disconnect between what we do as consumers and the environmental impact. For example, people don't make the link between the resources needed (and subsequent pollution) to make their plastic water bottle, their purchase of the product (most likely including transportation waste), and what happens to the bottle once they are done. Is that topic something addressed in your new show, or is are additional shows needed to get in that deep?

Thank you.

**Edward Norton:** One of the things I like about *Strange Days* is that at the end of each story showing the hidden interconnections between global events, the writers tie it back to our small daily actions and offer simple, clear ways that we can alter our daily choices and affect these dynamics. Most of it is genuinely easy, requiring little sacrifice or extra effort.

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**Louisville, Ky.:** Do you know how many panels the Solar Neighbors Program has placed thus far?

**Edward Norton:** I can't give you a total number of panels. We're getting close to having donated over 100 kW worth of free systems to low-income families. About 50 families have received systems and we've done two large systems on affordable housing rental buildings or homeless SRO projects. This doesn't count the celebrity participation which is probably another 100-200 kW worth.

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**Dude, You're an Actor:** It's great that you care about the planet and all, but you're an actor. Is acting just a sideline from your academic research career, or is there some other reason you think you should be telling us what to do?

**Edward Norton:** I'm not telling anybody what to do. Do whatever you want. I'm just interested.

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**Washington, D.C.:** Mr. Norton, thank you for holding this chat. The simple truth is that rarely does the public or science community have a chance to rebut the very public assertions of actors and other 'big' names in regard to environmental and other political issues. Do you think the public should consider the lack of peer review and its impact on the reliability or credibility of the information you disseminate?

**Edward Norton:** I'm not personally asserting anything. These are simply issues that interest me and that I think are very worthy of broad discussion. I think informed debate is absolutely crucial. If you watch the series you'll see that nothing that is presented is not peer-reviewed science. It's all peer-reviewed, which I agree must be the standard. What's interesting to me is when the American chemical companies try to rebut extensive peer reviewed science about Bisphenol-A by citing NON-peer reviewed, industry paid scientists. The tobacco companies did the same thing for years. Those are the assertions that should be critiqued most fiercely.

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**New Orleans, La.:** Some times actions speak louder than words or seminars. Will you agree to arrive at every red carpet awards event for the remainder of 2008 and all of 2009 in an energy efficient vehicle, instead of a stretch limousine?

**Edward Norton:** I haven't ridden in a stretch limo in years. I can't stand them. I've used only a company in LA called Evo Limo that has a full fleet of low-emission vehicles, including CNG SUV's... there are two good companies in NY too...a bunch of us have pushed the studios to use only these companies and the pressure has apparently made some of the big commercial companies like CLS and BLS start buying efficient cars. It's a drop in the bucket but it's a step in the right direction.

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**San Antonio, Tex.:** What are your feelings on bio-fuels?

Do you see them as a viable energy alternative or do we need to invest in some other technologies?

**Edward Norton:** I don't have nearly enough expertise to judge how much bio-fuels can accomplish in the grand scheme of things. I'm trying to learn more about it. It does seem to me from what I'm reading that corn-based ethanol is a bad choice because it's extremely energy inefficient. Brazil seems to have had a lot of success becoming energy independent by utilizing their sugar cane cash crops for biofuel/flex fuel.

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**Anonymous:** Edward, as a consequence of hosting and narrating the *Strange Days* series have you altered any of your personal habits and if so which ones?

Carmel, Calif.

**Edward Norton:** The series definitely tuned me in to how much I was using plastic bags. I've tried to cut down on that.

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**Freising, Germany:** Have you and your team ever looked into the effect that increased levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere are having on the oceans?

According to an article in *Mother Jones Magazine* [The Fate of the Ocean](#) (*Mother Jones*, March/April), "Among the most frightening news for coral reefs is the increasing acidity of the ocean as a result of rising levels of carbon dioxide". Apparently, the CO2 absorbed by the oceans changes its pH level, which will eventually cause the shells and skeletons of reef-building corals and mollusks to degrade.

**Edward Norton:** Yes, this gets discussed very specifically in the series. There's a whole storyline on it. I agree, it's terrifying. Check it out...they present it really well. In addition to average ocean temperatures rising, they think ocean acidification from carbon loading is likely to be one of the most serious threats to reef health and zooplankton populations.

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**Edward Norton:** Time's up apparently. Sorry I couldn't answer more questions...so many good ones. To be clear, I don't assert any kind of personal expertise as to the science behind these issues...I'm just interested and concerned like many people. The series provides some very penetrating insights by peer-reviewed scientists and is really worth checking out. Thanks for a cool dialogue.

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## green room

# Water, Water Everywhere and Not a Drop To Drink

America's unhealthy attachment to spring water.

By Meghan O'Rourke

Monday, April 21, 2008, at 7:56 PM ET

Just the other day, it seems, bottled water was a status symbol par excellence. Green glass Perrier bottles studded the Four Seasons like diamonds did the fingers of socialites. Demi Moore and Madonna toted liters of Evian with the aplomb of Jackie Kennedy carrying her Gucci hobo. Rumor had it that Michael Jackson bathed in the stuff. The secret to Raquel Welch's glossy locks? Shampooing with Evian. Madonna even [simulated oral sex with an Evian bottle](#) in her 1991 documentary *Truth or Dare* (NSFW). When it came to spring water, too much was never enough; women's magazines chirped month in and out about water's fabulous health benefits, the "glow" that came from downing a minimum of [eight crystalline glasses](#) a day.

But the times they are a-changing. Thanks to the faddish explosion of the green movement, bottled water has become the latest—and purest—symbol of crass conspicuous consumption. To many, Evian no longer denotes fresh-faced purity, but an oily blot on the green earth. Eco-conscious Web sites trumpet headlines like "[Five Reasons Not To Drink Bottled Water](#)." Last summer, Gavin Newsom—America's most stylin' mayor—banned the use of San Francisco city funds for bottled water, and this March, Seattle's mayor followed suit. Meanwhile, sales of reusable eco-friendly bottles like [Sigg](#) have surged, with the company's revenues in early 2007 skyrocketing 80 percent over the previous year's. While the rejection of bottled water may seem like the latest self-serving eco-fad, at its heart is a reckoning with an ugly truth. Our addiction to water purity is, ironically, making the world—and our water supplies—unhealthier than ever.

Of course, the backlash was probably inevitable. It wasn't that long ago, after all, that Americans were pretty happy with their tap water. Then, in the summer of 1977, Perrier launched a concerted ad campaign in the United States featuring Orson Welles, hoping to catapult its spring water from a niche product (about 2 million bottles sold a year to what *Time* called "[discriminating, well-heeled 'Perrier freaks'](#)") to a fashion accessory with broad market appeal. The campaign popularized the vague health claims and the appeals to the "mystique" of bubbling-springs-untouched-by-man that would become the de rigueur icons of the mineral-water movement. (Gustave Leven, the company's then-president, said, "Americans will love Perrier because it is nice for your digestion" and dropped hints about its "nonfattening" heart benefits.) Between 1978 and 1979, sales in

the United States rose from \$20 million to \$60 million. And in the '80s, fueled by the burgeoning health craze, mineral water's appeal to celebrities and Wall Street execs as a status-symbol-cum-health-necessity grew sharply. By 1988, Perrier was a juggernaut, selling some 300 million bottles a year; it took a benzene scare to shake its chokehold on the market. At that point, companies like Evian, having already spotted opportunity, were poised to step in and take a piece of the pie.

What no one could have anticipated was just how big that pie would become. As fast as bottled-water sales grew in the 1970s, it's nothing compared with what's happened over the last decade and a half. According to Elizabeth Royte, author of the informative, forthcoming *Bottlemania: How Water Went on Sale and Why We Bought It*, U.S. bottled-water sales actually jumped from \$115 million to \$4 billion between 1990 and 1997. Global water sales today are estimated to be close to \$100 billion. This second leap in growth is due in large part to the development of polyethylene terephthalate (PET). PET is a flexible, durable, light plastic that "revolutionized" the industry, according to the president of Nestlé Waters of North America. Cheaper than polyvinyl chloride bottles, it helped enable a transition from heavy glass packaging to portable plastic. As Charles Fishman aptly put it in *Fast Company*, the plastic bottle "did for water what the pop-top can had done for soda: It turned water into an anywhere, anytime beverage, at just the moment when we decided we wanted a beverage, everywhere, all the time." Today, estimates suggest that the bottled-water market continues to expand by an astonishing 7 percent a year.

And yet there's nothing benign about that Evian bottle, despite its soothing emanations of purity and good health. In fact, water, more than any other commodity, epitomizes the health troubles created by our convenience-first portable economy. The very thing that allowed the water market to expand—plastics—may be making the world vastly less healthy for all of us. In the first place, contaminants from plastics like PET leach into the ground and the water around us. And evidence is [accumulating](#) that the phthalates in flexible plastics such as PET can interfere with our endocrine system at high doses—disrupting the regulation of hormones and leading to imbalances that interfere with reproduction.

Even if plastic has no such effects on the human body, it's still turning the environment into a bigger mess. Each year, the United States disposes of some 30 billion empty bottled-water containers. Water bottles are filling up our landfills: Two million tons of plastic water bottles a year ultimately end up in them. (And that's not counting all the bottles that end up in rivers and oceans instead.) According to the Earth Policy Institute, it now takes more than 17 million barrels of oil to make enough PET to meet America's demand for bottled water—enough to fuel more than 1 million cars a year. What's more, shipping individualized water bottles across the country burns through still more oil and leads to a larger carbon footprint for all of us. Royte estimates

that each water bottle we buy consumes one-quarter of its volume in oil in production and transportation costs.

What makes matters worse is that very few bottled-water drinkers actually recycle their Evian or Fiji, meaning that our idealization of remote mountain springs has led in practice to ever more mountainous piles of plastic crud around us. By several estimates, fewer than 15 percent of PET bottles are recycled. In fact, recycling rates of water bottles have actually *declined* since 1994, according to the [Container Recycling Institute](#). One reason is that container-deposit laws, or "bottle bills," generally don't apply to water bottles (and container-deposit laws have a proven effect on recycling rates). Poland Spring is the best-selling spring water in the United States, but most states' bottle bills don't apply to water; Maine is the only one that offers a nickel refund for the popular half-liter version. Meanwhile, bottlers have a shortage of scrap PET to work with, according to CRI, meaning that most bottles are made with new materials.

No one could have anticipated the extraordinary cultural shift that our infatuation with bottled water represents. Today, even green-minded Americans have become significantly less inclined to drink tap water. And perhaps for good reason: Tap water in the United States isn't actually as safe as it could be. At least 92 percent of suppliers meet federal safety standards, to be sure, but the pipes in many old houses and buildings aren't necessarily up to snuff, as Royte underscores in *Bottlemania*. A five-month investigation by the Associated Press released in March found that there were pharmaceutical drugs and hormones in the water supplies of 24 major metropolitan areas, affecting 41 million Americans.

But the real reason, clearly, has to do with the confluence of status, health, and—perhaps most powerfully—convenience that bottled water has come to represent. The fundamental root of the bottled-water fad is the American love of single-serve packaging. In fact, by the 1990s the appetite for bottled water was so voracious that it almost didn't matter what was in the bottle: The allure of "pure" mineral water drawn from faraway places had been overtaken by the simple convenience of water in bottles and by dietitians' guidance of overweight Americans toward calorie-free replenishment; along the way, Coke and Pepsi realized that processing tap water might sell nearly as well as "pure" mineral water, and thus brands like Dasani and Aquafina were born. By 2006, 44 percent of bottled-water sales in the United States "came from municipal supplies," according to Royte (who also points out that such processed water is ultimately cleaner than most tap water, even if it comes from unglamorous Queens, N.Y.).

That's why so many ecologically minded people feel it's time for Americans to wake up and smell the toxins, as it were. As ethicist Peter Singer has put it, we have to ask ourselves questions about the value of purchasing bottled water—which



involves negotiating the environmental cost of packaging and transporting it—versus the value of drinking tap water. Water, he stresses, is unlike Coke or Merlot or orange juice: We can get it from our own taps, at little (if any) cost to ourselves or the environment. After all, even among purist health freaks, there's no reason not to use coolers (which are less environmentally wasteful than half-liter bottles). Filters haven't caught on with the majority of Americans, perhaps because they're daunting to install, but they are the most sensible and safe alternative to rampant spring-water consumption. Finally, states should pass container laws encouraging Americans to recycle bottled water.

This rampant commodification of water, while in one sense a terrible thing, does make it impossible to ignore a future reality: The fact that we probably are going to end up paying for water. The starker truth hidden beneath the "bottled-water wars" is the reality that the United States is facing a potential water-shortage crisis. The Worldwatch Institute has called water scarcity "the most underappreciated global environmental challenge of our time." If we're really going to open our eyes to the murk lurking within our crystalline Evian, we might even want to put a sin tax on water bottles: Ironic as it may seem, perhaps American purists should be taxed for all the damage that their spring-water addiction wreaks on the world, much the same way many of us are taxed for our affection for alcohol and cigarettes. You might say it would push people to a healthier alternative and force most of us to focus on the real issue: making tap water safer for consumption. We could use revenue raised from such a tax to expand recycling efforts and ramp up efforts to keep pipes clean and municipal water supplies unpolluted. For now, though, the anti-bottled-water motto might be, the cleaner the water you drink, the dirtier the world you live in.

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## green room

### Earth Chats: Bill McKibben

If we don't slow global warming through growth control, we'll have to fight its disastrous effects.

Monday, April 21, 2008, at 5:26 PM ET

*Slate* invited author Bill McKibben to take readers' questions on *Washingtonpost.com* about solving the climate-change crisis. An unedited transcript of the chat follows. See the [schedule](#) of *Slate's* upcoming Earth Chats.

**Stockholm, Sweden:** In light of the current food crisis (partly as a cause of the wrong-headed "biofuel" solution) and with the rise of China and India to American levels of consumption, and the hemming and hawing of politicians, just how hopeless is the climate problem? For me? For my children? For my grandchildren?

**Bill McKibben:** It's on the edge of hopeless—the scientists are telling us now that going past 350 parts per million co2 means massive climate disruption. We're at 385 ppm right now—and what do you know, the Arctic is melting.

That's why we've just formed 350.org. May analysis is that the next round of international climate negotiations, set to conclude Dec 2009 in Copenhagen, are the last real bite at the apple. If we can somehow do the massive political lifting between now and then to get a strong treaty, well, we have a chance.

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**Albany, N.H.:** A small group of us have started to meet to discuss ways that we can start to relocalize our community of approximately 750 people. Roughly 5/6 of our town lies within the White Mountain National Forest, and we have little industry. Most people are employed out of town. We initially are focusing on food and energy. Any thoughts or ideas would be greatly appreciated.

**Bill McKibben:** Your town sounds like mine (except we're in the Green Mountain National Forest). Food and energy are the places to begin, because they're so central, and because the centralized approaches are starting to break down. But don't neglect culture either—local music is a remarkably good place to start.

Local farmers market? Small scale hydro? Check out the work that's going on in the UK with the Transition Town movement, and in this country at the post-carbon institute.

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**Chicago:** Isn't it true that solar activity appears to be the principal driver for climate change, accompanied by complex ocean currents that distribute the heat and control local weather systems?

**Bill McKibben:** No. Solar input has fluctuated very little in recent times, nowhere near enough to explain the sudden surge in temperatures. The only thing that does is anthropogenic emissions of carbon dioxide. We're taking a couple of hundred million years worth of carbon and tossing it up into the atmosphere in a century. Given what we know about the heat-trapping power of co2's molecular structure, the resulting warming should come as no great surprise—and the scientific consensus behind it is now very strong

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**Vancouver, B.C.:** I'm sorry, I have not read your book (give me time!), so forgive me if you've covered this previously. How do societies with large families because of religious beliefs cope

with steep population growth? Changing secular policies (e.g. China) is easy compared with changing centuries of religious teaching limiting birth control.

**Bill McKibben:** Don't worry overmuch about religious strictures and their effect on population. The two countries with the lowest birth rates on earth, Italy and Spain, are the two most heavily Catholic countries on the planet. Ditto for Mexico and Brazil in the developing world. (to the degree that the Catholic church is an effective part of the education system in the developing world, it's probably actually contributing to cutting birth rates). At the moment, the most pressing question for climate change is how to bring consumption rates down.

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**Montpelier, Vt.:** Hey, Bill. I'm wondering, what do you think of Lieberman-Warner? A step in the right direction that should be supported, or a "least we can do" approach that kills the momentum toward better, more substantial policy?

**Bill McKibben:** It clearly needs to be much stronger—and it clearly needs to be seen as, at best, a first step in the two-step process that leads to a strong international agreement soon. A particularly important provision is that, as Barack Obama has insisted, all the carbon permits in the Lieberman-Warner bill need to be auctioned off with the proceeds for the public, not given away to industry

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**Burbank, Calif.:** If growth is not a good sign of economic strength, is the converse true? In other words, we generally define recession as two consecutive quarters of economic decline, but might slow growth be almost as important a warning of economic troubles?

**Bill McKibben:** My guess is that we may be reaching the point that people have predicted for some years, where the confluence of limits that we're reaching begin to make continued progress along our old path of economic growth unlikely. That is, one part of our current problem is the credit crunch stuff. But another is the skyrocketing price of energy, now beginning to mix in with the price/availability of food, and both of those impacted in various ways by climate change. I wonder if this won't turn out to be not just one little downturn in our economic cycles, but a break point

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**Washington:** There has been a lot of media attention lately focused on the question of how much it will cost to address climate change. Doesn't this assume erroneously, that the actions we need to take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions *cost* money,

when in fact they often *save* money? Shouldn't we be talking about how to profit from solving climate change?

**Bill McKibben:** Sure, it's good to focus on that. It's also good to focus on how much it will cost if we don't take action. Nick Stern originally estimated it would be the combined cost of both World Wars and the Depression—and last week he said that was an underestimate given new data.

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**Honolulu:** Concerning growth, isn't the problem that we constantly try to maximize it instead of identifying and then preserving an optimal point? Doesn't anything (e.g. capitalism, democracy) that grows beyond a certain optimal point start to become dysfunctional and eventually defective?

**Bill McKibben:** An interesting question. It seems possible to me that economies and societies may need to grow for a while, and then need to mature. In my view, the signals we're now getting from the natural world are a sign that the maturation moment is upon us. (the tough part is that the Indian economy, say, still needs to grow—people there are too poor. How we'll manage to let that happen is going to be the bloody crux of the global negotiations now beginning)

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**New York:** On Sept. 11, 2005, to mark the fourth anniversary of the attacks, you published an op-ed in the San Francisco Chronicle claiming Hurricane Katrina's destruction was a direct result of anthropogenic global warming. You wrote that "Katrina marks Year One of our new calendar, the start of an age in which the physical world has flipped from sure and secure to volatile and unhinged." In the past week, prominent studies have concluded that there is absolutely no link between higher average temperature and storm intensity. Do you stand by your earlier statements?

**washingtonpost.com:** [After Katrina, the climate just gets worse and worse](#) (*San Francisco Chronicle, Sept. 11, 2005*)

**Bill McKibben:** Sure

In the first place, you dramatically overstate the retrenchment on hurricane data—see, for instance, Andy Revkin's talk with Kerry Emmanuel at DotEarth recently

Second, the world has become far more volatile and unhinged in the years since. For instance, the Arctic melted at a bizarre and unprecedented rate last summer, scaring the hell out of many scientists.

I imagine, in a world of rising sea levels and increased

storminess, the pictures of Katrina will haunt us for a very long time, much like the pictures of 9/11

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**Washington:** Do you think that it's important for the U.S. to be leader in fighting climate change, even if China and other countries are slower to adapt?

**Bill McKibben:** We've got to be the leader. We've been pouring carbon into the atmosphere for more than a century (and CO<sub>2</sub>'s residence time in the atmosphere can be upwards of a hundred years); the Chinese are rank beginners. And their per capita emissions are 1/4 ours (which means they could 'solve' their greenhouse problem by splitting into 4 countries, each as large as the US but with only 1/4 the emissions). We're going to have to set a good example—and we're going to have to be willing to broker some kind of carbon Marshall plan that lets them develop without burning all that 2 cents/kwh coal.

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**Washington:** Would drilling for oil in Alaska help North America's environmental concerns?

**Bill McKibben:** Um, no.

ANWR holds at best a few months supply of oil. The place to drill is under Detroit—big increases in mileage would do endlessly more for our energy security.

Meanwhile, any oil you find in Alaska now will be a) a mess to drill but more importantly b) a mess to burn. We've got to leave as much coal and gas and oil in the ground as possible, and a good place to start exercising restraint would be at the very farthest fringe of our continent.

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**Arlington, Texas:** What is the biggest environmental challenge facing the planet today?

**Bill McKibben:** Global warming. If we don't slow it down soon, we'll be doing nothing but responding to its effects.

We've just formed 350.org, the first attempt at a global grassroots climate movement. It's kind of fun (join us!). It's also kind of a longshot.

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**Latrobe, Pennsylvania:** I attend a small college in the foothills of Pennsylvania, and considering that my campus is immersed in

nature, we consistently endanger our beautiful landscape with ongoing construction, paving new parking lots to accommodate growth, and constantly running a parking shuttle to and from these new parking lots (which, may I add, aren't that far from campus). I'm currently working on a project proposal to "green" our campus by replanting the trees cut down by construction. What is an effective argument to compromise and balance growth with environmental awareness? Is it possible?

**Bill McKibben:** One way is to work the other way around. Get your college to sign on to the President's Climate Initiative (700 colleges or so have done so already). Then start pointing out the things that really need to be done to get to carbon neutrality. Check out AASHE (Am Assoc for Sustainability in Higher Ed, or some such) for good help in the effort. And thanks!

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**East Lansing, Mich.:** Do you support state or federal regulatory regimes that encourage private development of green energy sources?

**Bill McKibben:** I think the key is to get the pricing of energy right—i.e., to inject a stiff price for carbon in at the federal and eventually the intl level. And once we've done that I think markets will be enormously helpful.

I think the govt's record in picking winner and loser technologies is spotty at best (cf, corn ethanol, maybe the worst idea of all time)

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**Anonymous:** Why do you think this issue wasn't given priority 10-15 years ago?

**Bill McKibben:** Well, I've had time to think about that, having written the first book about it for a general audience 19 years ago. I think most of the rest of the world did get to work—but here we were hampered by the very calculated obfuscation campaign carried out by the fossil fuel industry. (Check out Ross Gelbspan's fine books documenting this campaign—The Heat Is On, and Boiling Point). I also think our particular form of journalism had trouble coping—it took objectivity to mean 'he said, she said', not a real effort to sift out the scientific consensus

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**West Boylston, Mass.:** Assuming that global warming is happening and that its causes are anthropogenic, shouldn't we still be measured in our response? In some cases couldn't the "cure" be worse than the disease? Just as an example, the current rush to biofuels is having a tremendous effect on the cost and

availability of food, and could leave millions starving—and for all we know could have 0 effect on our total carbon dioxide emissions.

**Bill McKibben:** Ethanol is the worst idea of all time.

Which is why we need, I think, a very strong response in terms of a price signal built into carbon, and then we need to let markets work out what makes sense after that. I think they'd head for much more sensible solutions for the most part. But if we're going to get that price signal from Washington, we need real political organization—hence 350.org, our new campaign

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**Montgomery County, Md.:** I don't know what to truly believe about global warming, but most science seems to show that it's occurring, and that it is caused by humans at least partially. But the cause for suspicion is obvious: for decades, the political left has been focused on attacking consumption—people are criticized for having big houses, driving big cars, spending a lot of money, etc. People were told (and sometimes forced) to stop consuming so much and, instead, give their money to various causes. The reason was because it was "unfair" to have a big house and it was "compassionate" (somehow defined) to help others.

Now, we are told we shouldn't drive a big car, shouldn't have a big house and should consume less, but now the reason is ... global warming. In other words, the restrictions and requirements are the same that liberals have been demanding for decades, but now the reason is environmental, rather than political/social. Don't you see how that makes people a little suspicious? I'm not saying I'm a global warming denier, but you have to understand why this is a tough sell. Thanks for reading.

**Bill McKibben:** You know, one of my recent books, *Deep Economy*, asked the question: is the supersizing of American life actually making us happy? The data seems to indicate otherwise—the percentage of Americans saying they're very happy with their lives has been trending steadily downwards—mostly because people feel an ever-stronger loss of community. Which in turn is related to that American dream you describe—our economy has spent fifty years being about 'bigger houses farther apart.' I think it's probably time to start examining all of this in a new light—and I don't think it breaks down liberal/conservative. Is a farmers market liberal or conservative? I don't know

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**Alexandria, Va.:** Bill—oil companies and other big corporations run ads on TV saying how green and forward-thinking they have become. Is this sincere, or opportunistic?

How can big industries be persuaded to become genuinely green?

**Bill McKibben:** The more penguins in the ad, the worse they're raping the planet.

The way to get corporations to do the right thing is to run up the price of carbon. We can't abdicate the regulation of our economy—that's the chief duty of a democracy. And free markets can't solve this problem until govt. acts to give them some information, in the form of a cost for carbon

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**Denver :** I think the major key to combat climate change is to develop alternative energy sources that are carbon-neutral. The trick is that such technologies currently are not particularly economical, and lots of research still needs to be done to turn such potential solutions into real solutions. (Disclosure: I'm a scientist interested in working in this area.) However, private investment in energy technology has been relatively flat. My question is, other than simply granting more government funds for basic and applied energy research, how can we encourage/stimulate private investment in this area?

**Bill McKibben:** At the risk of repeating myself (and I can't type fast enough to keep up with this flood of good questions), the key is to change the relative balance of costs. 2 cent coal makes everything else look bad; send a signal that 2 cent coal is no more and all of a sudden the investment in everything else will burgeon.

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**Newark, N.J.:** Which presidential candidate is best positioned to address your environmental concerns and why?

**Bill McKibben:** I'm backing Obama. He's good on climate, he's been educated to a degree on coal, and most importantly I think he may actually hold the promise of being able to reopen dialogue with the rest of the world. We're hated everywhere, not least for our climate folly. So the best way to get people to re-evaluate us may be to elect a skinny young black guy with a funny name. People everywhere would have to say—there's more to American than I thought in my cartoon version. (A version too accurate in the last 8 years)

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**New York:** Why is there so much emphasis on raising CAFE standards for automobiles when any changes are by necessity slated far into the future. Auto manufacturers then lobby Congress with emphasis on the economic impact from the fact that customers prefer larger cars, SUVs and trucks. Why not



make the "gas guzzler" tax an annual tax rather than a one-time cost? Most vehicle purchases are financed, so this tax has very little impact on the purchase decision. Additionally, buying a used vehicle completely bypasses this expense! An annual charge of several thousand dollars would reduce greatly the demand for larger vehicles, thereby having a more current impact.

**Bill McKibben:** that's an interesting plan. I'll pass it on

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**Los Angeles:** How much of a concern is wealth disparity? Does this affect overall buying power?

**Bill McKibben:** It's a huge problem, especially internationally. Trying to solve global warming in such an unequal world is conceptually very hard—it means that we need to do some real work to help the poor world bear the cost

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**Toronto:** Hi Bill. Are you an advocate of the "steady state" economy advocated by ecological economists such as Herman Daly? If so, do we know what the optimal scale might be for such an economy? A related question—do you think it's time to begin thinking again of what the optimal population might be for places like the United States and Canada? Cheers.

**Bill McKibben:** At the very least we need a trajectory back towards the local and away from the global, which i think will make it easier for us to imagine an economy that doesn't grow. And in terms of population that gets a little easier to think about as world pop growth starts to slow markedly—we're not going to double again, so one driver of the need for endless growth will eventually start to moderate. We need to go to work on the others now

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**Front Royal, Va.:** How is it possible to determine the cost-effectiveness of any measure to stop or slow global warming?

**Bill McKibben:** Figure out what a reasonable price for carbon should be (i.e., what it will take to drive concentrations down below the safe level of 350 ppm). Once that price is factored into the cost of fossil fuel, we'll have a good idea from the markets about what is really economical

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**Washington:** The most oft-ignored cause of warming, deoxygenation and low-atmosphere toxification is factory

farming. Europe recognizes it. Why won't we? Are these industries more potent than even the oil industry?

**Bill McKibben:** They're much too potent (see ethanol). It's one big reason to back the trend towards local, diversified agriculture.

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**Orlando, Fla.:** Are you a dreary-eyed Malthusian? Do you have a good working relationship with that great anti-human environmentalist Felix Rohatyn? Do you believe technology has the potential to solve environmental and population problems? If so, why are you not championing those solutions rather than an turn to a new Dark Age?

**Bill McKibben:** I'm extremely dreary—I wrote a book called The End of Nature. And I think technology will be a big part of the solution—high tech (like concentrated solar power) and cool tech (like bicycles). I work to get the political and economic framework that can maximize those possibilities. I've never met or corresponded with Mr. Rohatyn. He's dreary also?

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**Washington:** With the economy, security and immigration being big issues for the presidential election; how do you see the environment fitting to this dialogue?

**Bill McKibben:** though they haven't; quite realized it yet, the biggest foreign policy questions for the new president will center on climate change—the ring of economic, env. and security problems caused by a destabilizing climate will grip his or her attention almost from the start. My sense is that Obama may realize this—he's talked about meeting with world leaders to discuss climate even before the conventions this summer, I think, though that was a while ago before we entered into the dreary trench warfare of the late primary campaign

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**Bainbridge Island, Wash.:** Governments are very poor at evaluating risk and picking a technological fix for a problem. Carbon-trading markets already have proven to be a huge boon for lobbyists and entrenched CO2 emitters in Europe. With that said, achieving reductions in CO2 emissions will require concerted worldwide action on a scale never before achieved. Would you agree that the small government approach to the problem of CO2—and perhaps the only one with any long-term chance of success—is a carbon tax charged at the point of extraction?

**Bill McKibben:** Call it a tax, or a cap, or whatever—your point is correct. We need to change the cost profile of carbon, which is

now free and needs to be expensive. When that happens, much will follow

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**Atlanta:** It seems to me that any carbon dioxide reduction plan except sequestration—which if I understand right does not work economically yet—would require reducing the amount of coal we consume for energy. The coal industry is not going to be happy about that, and will seek to find further markets for their product. How can we ensure that the American coal mining industry does not suffer unduly (a political nightmare) and that whatever further markets they find remain "green"?

**Bill McKibben:** I don't care particularly about the coal industry, but I do about the people who work in it. They need and deserve serious retraining. Luckily, there aren't many people in that industry anymore (not because of environmentalists, but because of mechanization). It should be doable

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**Oakland, Calif.:** Most politicians talk about implementing a "cap-and-trade" program for carbon emissions as the preferred method of reducing the Nation's emissions profile. Economists, however, point out that a carbon tax could accomplish the same result with substantially reduced bureaucratic overhead costs. Which do you support, a carbon tax or a cap-and-trade program? What role do the political ramifications of even oblique references to "raising taxes" play in this debate?

**Bill McKibben:** I think they're roughly the same (if designed right) and I understand the difficulty that American politicians have in uttering the word tax. I think that people should take a look at the Cap and Dividend system, also called Skytrust, proposed by Peter Barnes—basically, the govt. would cut us each a check annually for our share of the atmosphere. I think it makes a good deal of sense politically

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**Montpelier, Vt.:** Have you heard about the concept of "natural capital"? The idea is that healthy ecosystems provide us with nonmarket goods and services (clean air, water recycling, nutrient recycling, flood protection, water delivery, pollination, micro- and macro-climate moderation, ozone protection, pest control, waste absorption, etc.). Bob Costanza at University of Vermont and some other economists from around the world have made a first estimation of the value of these services, and it tops \$3 trillion every year—larger than the combined GDPs of the world.

We're losing ecosystem services globally. We never have priced these services, let alone valued them at anything like their

market value. What do you propose to do to stop the drawdown—the wanton destruction—of natural capital? Don't you see a role for wise policy to set limits to what the free market can do with the ecosystems that provide us with these services?

**Bill McKibben:** Yes—that's a key role for governments to perform. And the easiest way to do it is probably to impose economic costs on the degradation.

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**Tucson, Ariz.:** A recent article in *Nature* suggests that, given the inertia of our Western world and the rapidly growing energy demands of East Asia, energy saving strategies alone will neither keep us in fuel nor save the Earth from warming. Without massive investment or the greatest slice of good fortune since the discovery of penicillin, expecting new technologies to ride to a timely rescue is surely naive. What, in your opinion, is the realistic way forward.

**Bill McKibben:** I think it's fine to invest new money; my guess is that the fastest way of doing that is to impose a high enough price on carbon that private enterprise sees the possibility of a big win in new technologies. I'm not adverse to the govt. doing research directly, but am sobered by the example of the ethanol folly on the wisdom of relying wholly on their technosavvy

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**Washington:** Sir, global warming is a fact. The more people you have on the planet and the more things you build, the warmer it will get. But as the science clearly shows, even if we were to shut down every coal-burning plant, we wouldn't make a difference. While global warming is a fact, man's influence on it is minimal. We had two ice ages before man was even here ... the heating on cooling of the Earth is natural.

We need to working towards clean air, water and soil. The global warming industry is diverting resources away from science that could better the lives of all mankind. The money being diverted is being used for projects not based on fact, and to enrich the carbon-offset business Al Gore started. The perversion of science that makes up the modern global warming cry is a crime.

**Bill McKibben:** Well, then I'm a criminal. This post is unscientific. If we shut down every coal burning plant—and that should be our eventual goal—the level of co2 in the atmosphere would start to fall. Which is a good thing, because it is unprecedentedly high, and clearly driving climatic destabilization. And the idea that it's a money-making scheme by Al Gore is beneath you.

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**Uniontown, Pa.:** Thank you for your time Mr McKibben. I would like to know your thoughts on the current U.S. population explosion. The population has grown by about 40 percent to 300 million since the 1960s. Current U.S. population studies indicate that we will grow by another 100 million by 2050. I welcome individual immigrants, but U.S. census records and all population studies now demonstrate that the majority of the past 30 years of exploding population growth has been because of immigrants and their children. Immigration averaged a reasonable 178,000 per year from 1925 through 1964; at these levels the U.S. was projected to achieve population stability by sometime in the 1990s. Unfortunately, Congress increased immigration levels approximately sixfold beginning in 1965.

Population is in some respects a global problem that requires a global solution. We should do everything we can to help those who already have immigrated legally and do all we can to help those countries that are struggling with poverty but, isn't it environmentally destructive and counterproductive to use the U.S. as a safety valve for those countries that refuse to control their own population growth?

**Bill McKibben:** You can find many of my views in a book of mine called *Maybe One*. If single-child families were as common as two-child families in America, we could still have historically high levels of immigration and see pop. plateau in this country. The main point of the book was: if you're worried about your child being a crazy 'only', stop worrying—they turn out just fine. (and the biggest reason Americans give for having two kids is so the first won't be a single child)

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**Ann Arbor, Mich.:** While the U.S. long has been the world's greatest source of carbon dioxide, data now suggests that China soon will surpass us (and potentially already has) in this area. Given that economic growth and rising standards of living correspond with greater energy consumption, and that China appears to have adopted coal generation for its electricity needs, what can the U.S. do to help mitigate the effects that economic development in Asia will have on global climate change?

**Bill McKibben:** That's why they call it global warming.

We can't scapegoat China (see post from a few minutes ago explain why). But we can help build a global Marshall Plan that will give us some chance of reasonable burden-sharing

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**Washington:** Proponents of increased efforts to reduce carbon emissions often talk about the new jobs such efforts would

create. Opponents argue that those efforts would destroy jobs, as industries with high carbon emissions would shut down. Please do not repeat either of those arguments. In general, the number of jobs in the economy is determined by macroeconomic factors; shifts in industries might move jobs—which can be awful for those who cannot transition—but the total number of jobs does not change.

The real question is what we want people to be doing: Every person working to reduce pollution is someone who can't be a teacher or a doctor. Is the reduction in pollution worth dedicating extra resources to that effort? Similarly, a coal miner produces both power (a benefit) and pollution (a cost). Is the net benefit positive enough and large enough to justify the resources devoted to coal mining?

**Bill McKibben:** If we don't get global warming under control, all we're going to be doing is deal with the consequences. Brazilian emergency rooms last week were admitting 80 dengue patients an hour in many regions—my guess is there wasn't much basic health education underway. So I think trying to prevent more such change is the wisest strategy in every way

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**Bangor, Maine:** In many countries where desertification is growing and lack of water has been and may be a continual problem, can large-scale greenhouses run off of solar panels, and can wart be recycled to grow some fresh vegetables or other food from seed or is the problem just too large? Quite frankly, the lighter jiffy 7 and containers are cheap and light to ship, as are the panels, etc., for greenhouses, and since ancient times some "garden" vegetables and foods have been grown in pots indoors. The problem is water. At least the seed, the peat pellets, soil, etc., is not like money or shipments of grain that suddenly can disappear without anyone knowing—either the greenhouse goes up and everything is there or you know it went elsewhere. If nothing else, wouldn't it supplement or ease some of the famine, etc., and teach how to grow and replant? Or is it too late?

**Bill McKibben:** Some interesting ideas here—I don't know the technical specifics, but do know that water is key. (And the warmer it gets, the more evaporates).

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**Los Altos, Calif.:** Do you support nuclear power as a way to decarbonize our energy supply? How do you explain your anti-growth views to people in developing nations?

**Bill McKibben:** I think developing nations do need to grow. Los Altos, I'm not so sure about. I think that markets should decide, given a strong carbon signal, whether nuclear power makes sense

or not. My bet—it's pretty far down the cost curve. But I'm willing to be proved wrong by markets

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**Hayden, Idaho:** I believe the nation as a whole (through the Congress) should have a strong voice in controlling or steering growth, so as to avoid explosions of urban growth in desert areas like Las Vegas where water is in such short supply. State and local governments are unable to deal with the political pressures to get the job done. Why not provide incentives or tax limitations to direct growth in less sensitive areas, such as the Dakotas or the Midwest? Do you agree?

**Bill McKibben:** An interesting idea and one I've never heard before. I think the bigger problem in the years ahead is going to be how to deal with people streaming out of the desert southwest because they've become such difficult places

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**Rockville, Md.:** Greetings. People are learning and getting more sophisticated—even the president specified "cellulosic ethanol" in his speech on energy. But many argue from a position of generalization with stuff like "biofuels are evil." How can we get the discussion to an educated level, rather than just shouting slogans at each other?

**Bill McKibben:** I guess we need discussions like this one. Thanks to all for taking part.

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## green room Envirogeddon!

Is it time to start wishing for the end of the world?

By Rebecca Onion

Monday, April 21, 2008, at 4:56 PM ET

**James Howard Kunstler**, author of the cranky anti-sprawl manifesto *Geography of Nowhere* and the alarmist peak-oil diatribe *The Long Emergency*, is, as Paul Greenberg [pointed out](#) in the *New York Times Book Review* yesterday, an environmentalist obsessed with a secular Armageddon. His latest book, published in February, is *World Made by Hand*. The novel describes one glorious summer in the life of a man in a small, upstate New York town after oil shortages, climate change, and nuclear war have destroyed the world. Notably, it was blurbed by Alan Weisman, another visionary of the eco-apocalypse. Last year, in *The World Without Us*, Weisman imagined how nonhuman nature might retake the globe after a total extinction of Homo sapiens. Both accounts suggest a fascination with

environmental destruction that verges on wishful thinking. Why can't the world just collapse already? Then "we"—or, at least, those of us with taste, discretion, and true environmental feeling—could get on with the business of remaking it ... without all those pesky extra people around.

*World Made by Hand* takes place a couple of decades in the future, after a series of rolling catastrophes has left people without electricity, communications, or transportation infrastructure. Hundreds of thousands of others have died of the "Mexican flu." Despite their burdens, the men and women of this imaginary world seem to have pretty good lives. Robert has lost his wife and children, but now he lives in an [Arts and Crafts](#) bungalow and makes his living as a carpenter—having been rescued, by the apocalypse, from an emasculating job as a software-marketing guy. The townspeople replace the suburban infrastructure with ever-more creative and beautiful houses and hold lively square dances. A beautiful and much younger widow, needing protection, falls into Robert's bed and makes him chicken stew with new potatoes and peas for dinner. (Kunstler's post-apocalyptic women have given up trying to be involved in government for their true roles as cooks and sex partners.) Even the occasional bouts of violence are cleansing, putting hair on Robert's sunken chest. In short, thanks to the world's upheaval, Robert becomes a true man while the people around him become a true community.

I would write off this hatefully regressive book as a fluke, unconnected to the environmentalism I know and love, if not for the resonances it shares with so many other green fantasies of the apocalypse. Kunstler and Weisman seem to relish the idea of an emptier earth—a longing that must have grown during eight years of Bush-era inaction on climate change and pollution. Their stories invite us to imagine how awesome the world would be if we could just live through one tiny apocalypse: Politicians, naysayers, and people who drive Hummers would get their final comeuppance. This strain of thought dates back to the 1970s, when, as anthropologist Bernard James wrote in his 1973 book *The Death of Progress*, "there [was] a sense of desperation in the air, a sense that man has been pitchforked by science and technology into a new and precarious age." After the [Cuyahoga River caught fire](#) in 1969 and the oil crisis rearranged perceptions of America's place in a global economy, some environmentalists turned to dire predictions as a way of shocking citizens into action. A few of these Cassandras wondered whether there might be positive outcomes for those who lived through the fall.

But the sunny environmental apocalypse has its roots in the thinking of the first American environmentalists. These turn-of-the-century gents were obsessed with the "tonic" provided by an individual's immersion into pure wilderness. Frontier stories—which describe landscapes where other humans are scarce, technology and law are nonexistent, and Nature reigns—are ancestors of the positive apocalyptic tales of both the 1970s and

today. As many recent writers have [pointed out](#), the idea of "wilderness," experienced by one happy camper, necessarily excludes many of the people now existing on earth—or, at least, relegates them to some other non-"wild" place.

The apocalyptic stories of the anxious 1970s indulged in this frontier dream of wiping the slate clean and starting over. This was the moment when overpopulation began to seem like a big problem, aided and abetted by tomes such as Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb*, published in 1968. Ehrlich has already been [taken to task](#) for his own fantasy of redemption through annihilation, imagining that potential die-offs or dramatic mass sterilizations would be necessary for a more balanced environment. Ehrlich apologized for his bluntness even as he advocated sending trained medical professionals to India to perform vasectomies. For the United States, he proposed the creation of a Department of Population and Environment to regulate procreation and industry and suggested that with a little government planning, we might all achieve an easygoing, pre-20<sup>th</sup>-century lifestyle with "more fishing, more relaxing, more time to watch TV, more time to drink beer (in bottles that *must* be returned)."

Another environmentalist of this time, Edward Abbey, was [famously invested in the idea](#) that the wilderness should be reserved for a relatively small number of people—only the physically fit and environmentally minded. In his 1980 novel of the apocalypse, *Good News*, the Southwest has collapsed, as has the rest of the United States and the world, after increasingly paranoid nations divert so many of their natural resources to weapons production that they lose the ability to provide food for their citizens. What survivors there are revert to a free-holding, barter-oriented society. There's a lot of violence between these anarchists and the repressive, impromptu army that springs up in the vacuum of state power. But here's the good news: The people left alive by the rampaging army get to ride horses for transportation and see the stars as they were meant to be seen.

Another doomsayer of the 1970s was Philip Wylie, who had become famous 30 years earlier when he lambasted the mothers of America for producing spoiled and coddled male children. His 1972 novel, *The End of the Dream*, told the story of a world that had collapsed under waves of environmental catastrophes, including a river that exploded (the Cuyahoga, taken to the next level); a poison gas event that killed most of New York City; and an invasion of sea nematodes, generated by massive imbalances in oceanic ecosystems, that ate human beings alive. However! A "Great Man" of vigor and resources has foreseen the world's downfall. This Rooseveltian figure shepherds his people into a secure location at his upstate New York manor, where he will proceed to rebuild the world with improved sexual mores and family structures.

This equation of emptiness with rebirth and human freedom was a new kind of frontier story—predicated not on distance from

civilization but on the wholesale death of civilization itself. As such, it also forms the basis for Kunstler and Weisman's utopian visions. While the enviros of the 1970s worried about population, we worry about climate change, but the possibilities for post-crisis humanity remain rosy. Kunstler's glorious images of ripped-up strip malls and catamounts in empty houses echo Weisman's regenerating landscapes, and both recall the new eco-orders of Abbey and Wiley. In the perfect green apocalypse, population reduction leaves a world in which everybody wins—birds, bees, and people.

Stories of post-calamity lives can help us imagine what it would take to restructure our world in the aftermath of ecological collapse. (They can also be cathartic for those enviros who would be happy to say goodbye to their apathetic neighbors.) But it is possible to write about post-apocalyptic green utopias that don't come off tasting a bit elitist. [Kim Stanley Robinson](#), a sci-fi author [beloved by environmental theorists](#), has written several series of books about environmental management. The Mars trilogy and the Three Californias trilogy in particular are noteworthy for their focus on the nitty-gritty of the creation of utopia. Rather than describe a pleasantly empty post-apocalyptic world in which humans rediscover their environmental connections, Robinson's books describe endless negotiations, summits, and conferences where futuristic earthlings hash out what's to be done with their environments. This vision of crisis reimagines a greener human society without killing tons of people off or excluding women from the political process. It may be boring and bureaucratic in comparison to Kunstler's, but at least in these stories there's a sense that rethinking our environmental ethics doesn't have to mean falling into a state of frontier justice or Nietzschean domination. Let's move forward with what we have, he says, not imagine it all away.

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## green room

### Earth Chats: Newt Gingrich

How to lower carbon output without hurting the economy or expanding governmental powers.

Monday, April 21, 2008, at 12:27 PM ET

*Slate* invited Newt Gingrich to take readers' questions on *Washingtonpost.com* about the best ways to address global warming. An unedited transcript of the chat follows. See the [schedule](#) of *Slate's* upcoming Earth Chats.

**Newt Gingrich:** I want to start by saying that I believe we need an entrepreneurial, science and technology oriented approach to the environment, and that most Americans agree with that. If you go to [www.americansolutions.com](http://www.americansolutions.com), and pull up the Platform of the American People, you will see that a majority of Democrats, independents, and Republicans all agree that



entrepreneurs can do more than bureaucrats to solve environmental challenges.

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**Newt Gingrich:** I think the tragedy has been that conservatives have been unwilling to spend the time and energy to debate the left on which will produce the better outcome.

For example, if you are really worried about carbon loading of the atmosphere...if the United States produced the same percentage of our electricity from nuclear power as the French, we would take 2 billion, 200 million tons of carbon out of the atmosphere a year, and that one step would be 15 percent better than the total Kyoto goal for the U.S.

So with that as an example, I look forward to answering your questions.

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**Cedar Falls, Iowa:** To what extent should the federal government finance research and development for green technologies?

**Newt Gingrich:** Very substantially in three forms.

1. Tripling the size of the Nat'l Science Foundation.
  2. By creating significant tax credits for R&D and the development of new replacement technologies.
  3. By offering very bold prizes that would be tax free for key breakthroughs such as a mass-producible hydrogen car.
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**Chicago:** Mr. Gingrich, I was wondering what your thoughts were on a carbon tax versus a cap-and-trade system to reduce carbon emissions. Do you favor either? Why? Thanks!

**Newt Gingrich:** Neither. I prefer incentives to punishments because they work faster and with less distortion of the economy. For instance, I favor tax credits for dramatically reducing carbon emissions. I favor a tax credit for trading in old cars that are the most polluting. I favor a tax credit for nuclear power, solar, and wind.

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**Huron, S.D.:** Sir, with Congress and the current president barely able to negotiate a bathroom break, and the promise of Republican payback looming if the Democrats take power in 2009, what leads you to believe that this issue will be any different than so many others as important? This issue is critical to our survival, but has been prioritized by our country as only a

middle layer of the onion yet to be peeled. Who has to give what, and how much?

**Newt Gingrich:** The reason we founded American Solutions and the reason we developed the Platform of the American People (containing items supported by a majority of Democrats, independents, and Republicans) was to find issues that bring us together so we can have a red, white, and blue dialogue instead of a red vs. blue debate.

One of the things we should propose to our politicians is that they spend 3 days a week working on items they agree on, and 2 days a week on items they know they will disagree on.

Anyone who says they can't find things we agree on should be fired, because it is simply not true. In the end, we get the elected officials we tolerate.

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**Kensington, Md.:** Kudos to you for this new initiative, and we all need for you to be successful (speaking as a liberal here). But why do you suppose conservatives have been so virulently hostile to science these past few decades? It's really like watching the 16th century papacy coming to terms with astronomy.

**Newt Gingrich:** Since I headed the Republican House which doubled the size of the NIH budget, served on the Hart-Rudman Commission, which said the decline of math and science education was our second greatest threat as a country, and helped save the international space station when short-sighted people wanted to kill it, I'm not sure I identify with your question.

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**New York:** Mr. Gingrich, do you have a suggestion as to why an absolute neophyte to the anthropogenic global warming concept should discount the recent evidence regarding the Medieval Warm Period? I am a former firm believer in AGW myself, yet I no longer support the theory, as I have not heard a single prominent environmental advocate who can discount the higher temperatures and lower carbon dioxide concentrations of that period.

**Newt Gingrich:** You raise a good point, and as somebody that studies paleontology, I am well aware we have had much higher carbon levels (pre-historic time periods, probably caused by volcanoes) and much higher temperatures in the past. In addition, around 11,000 years ago, the Gulf Stream stopped for 600 years for reasons we don't understand. Europe went into an ice age. Then the Gulf Stream restarted for reasons we don't understand and the ice age disappeared.

So a great deal of the "current science" is in fact politics.

However, the word "conservative" includes "conservation" as its root. And conservatives should be cautious. Therefore, I am willing to look for methods of lowering carbon that do not destroy the economy or give the government increased power.

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**Washington:** Critics of the property rights platform of the Contract With America argued that requiring the public to routinely pay to protect the environment would impose large and unfair financial burdens on the taxpayer as well as derail environmental protections. Where do you stand now on that part of the Contract?

**Newt Gingrich:** I think property rights are an inherent part of our constitutional liberty and I do not understand those who would steal without compensation. If it is important enough, the government can pay for it. Taking without compensation is tyranny.

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**McLean, Va.:** In the 1990s, when you ran the House, you tried to shut down the Department of Energy, successfully cut research funding and other support for all clean energy research (including biofuels), fought (actually stopped) the joint government-industry effort to develop a superefficient car, shepherded efforts to zero out all the programs aimed specifically at reducing greenhouse emissions and accelerating technology deployment, and eliminated the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA). Considering your actual record, why should we take your prescriptions seriously?

**Newt Gingrich:** Well, Edward O. Wilson, one of the leading biologists in the world, described me as the savior of the Endangered Species Act. As Republican whip in 1990 I helped pass the Clean Air Act which led to a dramatic improvement in acid rain. And I have been actively involved in environmental issues since I taught environmental studies at West Georgia College from 1970-78.

We should distinguish leading on the environment with sustaining bureaucracies that do little. The Office of Technology Assessment was bureaucratic and obsolete and I recommended Congress develop a relationship with the Nat'l Academy of Sciences which would give us better scientific advice. The project on the car threw money away without achievement. The Dept. of Energy is an obsolete bureaucracy that has failed to solve our nuclear waste problems despite spending an immense amount of money.

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**Chicago:** "I prefer incentives to punishments because they work faster and with less distortion of the economy." But didn't a cap-and-trade system work well in reducing sulfur dioxide emissions in the 1990s?

**Newt Gingrich:** That cap and trade system involved a very small number of players and a very specific product. A carbon cap and trade system would be massively more complex. It would lead to corruption, political favoritism, and would have a huge impact on the economy.

I think that tax credits for reducing carbon loading would work faster in a much more decentralized way by rewarding people for doing the right thing.

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**Burbank, Calif.:** Would you accept being Secretary of Energy if President McCain asked you?

**Newt Gingrich:** No but I would be willing to Chair a Commission on establishing huge tax-free prizes for all the breakthroughs we need.

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**South Bend, Ind.:** Obviously the United States taking action on reducing its carbon emissions would be a good thing, but how would you propose to get China, India and the developing world to use greener technologies and prevent deforestation?

**Newt Gingrich:** You ask exactly the question which led me to write Contract with the Earth with Terry Maple. A regulatory litigation model of coercing change has no hope of being effective in China and India in the next 30 years because they are desperate for economic growth and a higher standard of living. Therefore, a successful environmental movement has to use science and technology and entrepreneurship to develop dramatically better solutions at much lower cost. For example, a very inexpensive hydrogen car would change the entire trajectory of environmental impact for China and India. CAFE standards have no prospect of working in those countries because the sheer number of additional cars would dramatically increase carbon loading. But American help in developing a next-generation hydrogen automobile system could preempt enormous quantities of carbon from every going into the atmosphere, and would be acceptable in China and India, not to mention the United States and the rest of the industrial world.

Thank you for having me. I encourage you to visit [www.contractwiththeearth.com](http://www.contractwiththeearth.com) to learn more about green conservatism.

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## hollywoodland

### Maybe TV Pilots Aren't Such a Bad Idea

NBC's plan to reinvent television hits an early snag.

By Kim Masters

Wednesday, April 23, 2008, at 2:47 PM ET

**New World Order:** NBC has pronounced that with its reinvention of the business of television, it is green-lighting shows without pilots to save money.

Exhibit A was *The Philanthropist*, a show about a rich guy who helps those in need. Why take a chance on a show without seeing a pilot? Because of NBC's belief in the talent associated with it. Specifically, Tom Fontana and Barry Levinson, whose credits include *Homicide: Life on the Streets*.

Now Levinson and Fontana are out over "creative differences" before the show has even gotten rolling. This was a show that NBC Universal touted at its "in-front" last month, when it was selling its upcoming schedule of (in some cases, nonexistent) shows to advertisers ahead of the usual May upfronts.

*The Hollywood Reporter* summed it up this way: "True to his gritty roots, Fontana focused on such social issues as immigration, drug addiction and the use of children soldiers in parts of world, while the network was looking for [a] more escapist and fantastical approach to fit the rest of its lineup." So it appears that NBC chief Ben Silverman jumped all over *The Philanthropist* on the basis of talent whose merits were somehow unfamiliar to him.

*Escapism* is the new mantra at NBC in the Silverman era. But does this mean it's a good idea to green-light shows on the basis of talent that escapes before the first episode is shot? Who's in charge now? We have posed these questions to NBC but, so far: radio silence. ([link](#))

**April 21, 2008**

**Silence:** Well, that's it. Bert Fields won't be called to testify in the [Anthony Pellicano](#) trial. The lawyer who linked clients with the now-imprisoned detective walks away.

Is Fields damaged in the eyes of the community by his longtime association with the man who allegedly conducted dozens of illegal wiretaps? Certainly some of us in the media who worked with him over the years feel that he should be convicted in the court of public opinion. One reporter acknowledges a feeling of powerful self-loathing at the memory of many cozy and

mutually beneficial conversations with Fields. That reporter is now convinced that he "cheated" his way to success.

We understand this entirely, having had cozy dealings with Fields ourselves. (None of which caused him to hesitate to threaten to sue us when representing a client—like, say, Tom Cruise.) Fields helped more than one journalist manage legal muddles involving their own interests. He assisted in getting trials opened (notably Jeffrey Katzenberg's suit against Disney). And when it suited him, he served up the dish. From a journalist's point of view, what wasn't to love? He is charming and wily. He is a man of parts: He has written a book about Shakespeare and another about Richard III. He is also [the author \(under a pseudonym\) of potboiler thrillers](#).

However remorseful journalists may be, others aren't feeling so dismayed about the tangled web that seems to have Fields in the middle. We asked one of Fields' very high-profile clients whether he was looking for new counsel. The answer was an emphatic "No." Fields has been under a cloud for an unconscionably long time, he told us, and the feds didn't have the goods. We pointed out that it's hard to believe Fields knew nothing of Pellicano's alleged wrongdoing. He chided us for making assumptions. "There's an Arthur Miller play about that," he said. "Just because you think it doesn't make it true." ([link](#))

**April 9, 2008**

**[How to piss off Steve Martin: If you've been dying to see Steve Martin reunited with Diane Keaton and you thought your thirst was about to be slaked, think again.](#)**

The story about the two starring in a movie called *One Big Happy* broke a few days ago. Turns out someone made one big boo-boo.

Keaton was interested in doing a project with Martin, and, we're told, he's fond of her, too. But he was not so sure about *One Big Happy*, an idea for a family comedy from Chris Keyser and Amy Lippman, who created *Party of Five* (and that was a while ago, wasn't it?).

Apparently Martin remained strictly noncommittal about the idea. But on March 30, *Variety* trumpeted that Paramount made a high-six-figure deal for the pitch with Keaton and Martin attached to star.

"He was annoyed that his name was put on as attached without his authorization," says another source with firsthand knowledge of the situation. "He was more than annoyed. He was really pissed off."

Who was responsible for getting ahead of the game? Our source believes the fault lies with Endeavor, the agency that represents Keaton. Her agent did not return our call. Another source says the idea was to nudge Martin along with the announcement. If so, it didn't work.

The tale of the Keaton-Martin reunion was widely disseminated, and at first Martin's "people" were going to demand a retraction. But after Paramount did some fast footwork, everyone concluded that it was only an announcement, after all, and let it go. You know how it is in Hollywood—just one big happy.

[\(link\)](#)

**April 9, 2008**

**Cold sweat:** Like a bad dream that keeps recurring, [the latest tape to leak to the Huffington Post in the Pellicano affair](#) reminds us ever so vividly of what it was like to deal with Michael Ovitz. The recording is an April 2002 talk between Ovitz and the now-imprisoned private detective. It was played in court today, with Ovitz on the stand.

When he placed the call, Ovitz had identified himself as "Michael" to Pellicano's assistant and said the call was about one of Pellicano's kids. The detective—obviously shaken—tries to explain his reaction to hearing that the caller is really Ovitz by saying that he actually is having a problem with one of his children. What's revealing is that Ovitz, who has complained publicly and bitterly and sometimes falsely that journalists were writing inappropriately about his kids, felt perfectly free to use one of Pellicano's kids for his own obscure purposes. "I knew you'd get on the phone," Ovitz explains. "Am I right or am I wrong?" To which Pellicano replies, "You should have just said, 'It's Michael Ovitz' and I would have gotten on the phone." (Duh.)

Ovitz then claims that his real reason for lying was that he wanted to keep his identity from Pellicano's assistant. As the tape rolled. Oh, the irony.

When Pellicano mentions that one of his children has a "problem," Ovitz swings into a trademark move: "You can always call me if you need medical help." That's a classic Hollywood favor that big donors to hospitals can confer, and it can certainly create lasting gratitude. "Do you need any help at UCLA?" Ovitz continues. The previous year, Ovitz had pledged \$25 million to UCLA's medical school. That offer was to be eclipsed a mere month after this conversation with Pellicano by a \$200 million gift from Ovitz foe David Geffen. The announcement came just as Ovitz's management company, AMG, went kaput. When it comes to vengeance, Geffen is truly an artist.

Having called Pellicano, Ovitz—ever the agent—tries to make it sound like he's doing Pellicano a favor. He wants to meet, he says, because "I think it would be beneficial to you and probably beneficial to me." Of course, Pellicano is only too happy to help. And not that Ovitz is self-dramatizing. He simply needs to see Pellicano about "the single most complex situation imaginable."

Apparently, that is having a couple of journalists writing negative stories about his troubled business. Thank God that doesn't happen to people every day.

As for the Ovitz testimony today, he expressed gratitude to Pellicano for getting him good information. How that information benefited him, however, remains unclear. [\(link\)](#)

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## hot document VD Valentines

Electronic greeting cards break the bad news gently to ex-lovers.

By Bonnie Goldstein

Wednesday, April 23, 2008, at 4:01 PM ET

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**From:** Bonnie Goldstein

**Posted Wednesday, April 23, 2008, at 4:01 PM ET**

The [Centers for Disease Control](#) has designated April 2008 "[STD Awareness Month](#)." Citing data that one in four Americans has a sexually transmitted disease, the agency is urging health care providers to distribute [pamphlets](#), hang [posters](#), and [e-mail](#) colleagues to raise consciousness about the importance of sexual health. With more than [19 million new cases a year](#), however, the CDC is going to need some help getting the word out.

One creative approach adopted by an Oakland, Calif.-based nonprofit called [Internet Sexual Information Services](#) takes its cue from the greeting-card industry. ISIS instructs people diagnosed with STDs to "notify everyone you've had sex with in the past six months" ("Oral sex counts, too") and suggests that, in doing so, you make use of a personal computer or Mac ("Try looking through your old e-mails and your online address book"). Once you've located the necessary e-mail addresses, ISIS invites you to choose one of six [specially designed e-cards](#). Each one can be forwarded to up to six lovers, friends with benefits, or "tricks" to break the bad news as gently as possible (Page 2). If you wish, you can make your greeting more medically specific by choosing your particular disease ("Chlamydia, Crabs & Scabies, Gonorrhea," etc.) from a pull-down menu. Sample e-cards in English and Spanish appear below and on the following five pages.

Hallmark, eat your heart out.

Send Hot Document ideas to [documents@slate.com](mailto:documents@slate.com). Please indicate whether you wish to remain anonymous.

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Posted Wednesday, April 23, 2008, at 4:01 PM ET

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## hot document McCain's Tax Returns

The GOP presidential candidate's 1040 forms provide an incomplete financial picture.

By Bonnie Goldstein

Monday, April 21, 2008, at 4:06 PM ET

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**From:** Bonnie Goldstein

Posted Monday, April 21, 2008, at 4:06 PM ET

On April 18, John McCain [released](#) his [1040](#) forms for tax years [2006](#) and [2007](#). They show an adjusted income of \$339,000 and \$386,000, respectively (see below and Page 3). McCain paid \$97,000 in taxes for 2006 and \$118,000 for 2007 (Pages 2 and 4).

The tax returns of candidates [Barack Obama](#) and [Hillary Clinton](#) showed each receiving about \$500,000 in royalties from their memoirs. McCain's [literary efforts](#) brought in about half as much—\$257,000 in 2006 and 2007—though it should be remembered that McCain has by now written many more books than either Democratic contender and that *his* best-selling memoir, [Faith of My Fathers](#), was released way back in 1999. In any case, one should resist concluding from McCain's tax returns that he's the pauper of the bunch. It seems that way only because he chose the IRS option "[married filing separately](#)," which allows him to exclude the income of his wife, [heiress Cindy H. McCain](#). (Obama and Clinton's returns were filed jointly, and therefore reflect the incomes of their respective spouses, Michelle and Bill.) The combined salaries of Sen. and Mrs. McCain *are* disclosed, however, because Arizona, where the McCains legally reside, is a [community property state](#) where married couples who file separate returns are nonetheless required to report and pay state taxes on one-half of any income "acquired through the efforts" of their spouses (minus one-half of each partner's deductible expenses). For the two recent years, McCain reported his half of the \$870,000 in salary his wife brought in as chairman of [Hensley & Company](#), a family-owned beer distributorship (see Pages 5 and 6). He deducted his half of \$115,000 in employment taxes for [more than \\$400,000 in wages to household staff](#). Presumably, Cindy McCain also receives



considerable investment income that she is required to disclose only in her own tax returns, which McCain did *not* make public.

Apart from Cindy's salary and her undisclosed investment earnings, the lion's share of McCain's cash receipts for the period came from the federal government: untaxed military retirement pay of more than \$56,000 per year and annual wages of roughly \$165,000 for representing the citizens of Arizona in the U.S. Senate. The [71-year-old McCain](#) also draws about \$20,000 a year in Social Security income.

Send ideas for Hot Document to [documents@slate.com](mailto:documents@slate.com). Please indicate whether you wish to remain anonymous.

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Posted Monday, April 21, 2008, at 4:06 PM ET

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## human nature

### Tastes Like Chicken

Growing meat without growing animals.

By William Saletan

Tuesday, April 22, 2008, at 8:41 AM ET

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***Read Daniel Engber's "[Science](#)" column on the fake-meat prize.***

Two years ago, I proposed a compromise between carnivores and vegetarians: We couldn't change our craving for meat, but we could change the way we sated it. The solution was to [grow meat in labs](#), the way we grow therapeutic tissue from stem cells.

Looks like I might get my wish.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals has just offered a \$1 million prize to anyone who develops a commercially viable "[in vitro chicken-meat product](#)." The catch is that the product can't contain or entail the use of "animal-derived products, except for starter cells obtained in the initial development stages."

The idea is simple: Instead of growing a chicken embryo into a bird and cutting meat from it, you skip the bird part and grow the meat directly from the embryo.

If you don't believe this can be done, read up on the [blood vessels](#), [livers](#), [bladders](#), and [hearts](#) we've already grown in labs. Check out this month's [International In Vitro Meat Symposium](#). Scan the latest updates on "[cultured meat](#)" [R&D](#).

It's no freakier or more far-fetched than what you've been hearing from politicians about stem cells and what they can do for people. Scientists aren't even allowed to try a stem-cell experiment in people till it works in animals. That's all PETA is [asking](#) for: "animal stem cells that would be placed in a medium to grow and reproduce."

To put it crudely, if you can grow a hunk of flesh for transplant, you can grow it for food.

If this idea repels you as a carnivore, imagine how it feels to a vegetarian. PETA co-founder Ingrid Newkirk [tells](#) the *New York Times* that the prize offer caused "a near civil war in our office" and that "we will have members leave us over this." Newkirk observes, "In any social cause community, there are people who strive for purity."

She's right. I've seen civil wars like this one in other communities. In the case of the abortion-rights movement, I wrote a [book](#) about it. Pragmatists thought they could broaden the movement's appeal by changing its language and arguments. Purists worried that these changes would narrow the movement's agenda. Both sides were right. This is an important lesson in politics: Message, constituency, and agenda are related. The broader your message, the broader your constituency, and the narrower your agenda. You have to choose your trade-offs.

Three years ago, when I left politics to [cover science](#), I took that lesson with me. Science, too, is political. But in science, the driving force that reframes issues, revises agendas, and realigns coalitions isn't the transformation of spin. It's the transformation of reality.

That force is now shaking up PETA and will soon confront the rest of us. Reality is changing. Eating meat and eating animals used to be the same thing. Now they're coming apart. Should we promote lab-grown meat so people can eat flesh without eating animals? Or is PETA's promotion of meat the final surrender to a mentality of predation?

Purists see it as a moral surrender. "It's our job to introduce the philosophy and hammer it home that animals are not ours to eat," a dissident PETA official tells the *Times*. Purists also point out that carnivores suffer more obesity, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and other diseases. Getting your meat from stem cells might not change that.

Pragmatists point to all the issues lab meat would resolve. No more cages. No more body-inflating drugs. No more slaughter. Less environmental harm. "We don't mind taking uncomfortable positions if it means that fewer animals suffer," Newkirk concludes.

The lab-meat movement, for its part, isn't sure it wants to get in bed with the animal-rights lobby. It sees a more broadly appealing rationale for its products: "[controlled conditions](#)" that facilitate the production of safer, healthier meat.

In principle, I'm a big fan of lab meat. But you have to understand what a colossal concession this is for the animal-rights movement. Lab meat "would mimic flesh," says PETA's [press release](#). Mimic? Lab meat *is* flesh. That's the whole point. The contest rules [explicitly demand](#) a "product that has a taste and texture indistinguishable from real chicken flesh." In fact, the product has to satisfy "a panel of 10 meat-eating individuals sourced from a professional focus group services provider." It won't walk or quack like a duck, so technically, it's not *a* duck. But if it tastes like duck, chews like duck, and comes from duck, it's duck.

When I wrote my plea for lab meat two years ago, a reader [cracked](#), "If God wanted us to be vegetarians, why did He make animals out of meat?" Here's the punch line: Animals were only the first incarnation of meat. Get ready for the second.

*(Note to readers: If you're accustomed to getting Human Nature articles and items by RSS feed, you'll need to subscribe separately to the feeds for the new Human Nature [Blog](#), [News](#), and [Hot Topics](#). Or you can simply bookmark the new Human Nature [home page](#), which links daily to all the new content. The shorthand URL is [humannature.us.com](#).)*

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## map the candidates

### Day Off

Obama is off the trail, while Clinton is in North Carolina, and McCain is in New Orleans.

By E.J. Kalafarski and Chadwick Matlin

Thursday, April 24, 2008, at 11:42 AM ET

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## map the candidates

### Clinton Loves Pennsylvania More

In the Keystone State, Hillary makes more stops than Barack.

By E.J. Kalafarski and Chadwick Matlin

Monday, April 21, 2008, at 3:22 PM ET

Forgetting about delegates, polls, and undecided voters for a moment, one thing is certain going into tomorrow's Pennsylvania primary: Clinton has spent more time there than Obama. On this metric, the math is simple. Since July 2007, Clinton [has made 53 stops to Obama's 41](#) in the state. Clinton has also spent five more days there than Obama.

Looking at [Map the Candidates' monster map](#), it appears Clinton spent more time in the Pittsburgh metro area, while Obama cozied up with Philly voters. A [recent poll from SurveyUSA](#) suggests that their stops have been making an impact—Clinton leads overall and in southwest Pennsylvania, but Obama owns the densely populated Philly area.

John McCain, meanwhile, has stopped in Pennsylvania only five times since July. That's what happens when you've already got the nomination in the bag.

*We've updated [Map the Candidates'](#) look to offer you even more information than before. [Click here](#) to explore the country's political landscape, and be sure to tap into the candidates' and states' statistics pages by clicking the popout symbols next to their names.*

[Map the Candidates](#) uses the candidates' public schedules to keep track of their comings and goings. A quick primer on your new election toolbox:

- Do you want to know who spent the most time in Iowa or New Hampshire last month? Play with the timeline sliders above the map to customize the amount of time displayed.
- Care most about who visited your home state? Then **zoom in on it** or type a location into the **"geosearch" box** below the map.
- Choose which candidates you want to follow with the **check boxes** on to the right of the map. If you only want to see the front-runners, then uncheck all of the fringe candidates. *Voilà!* You're left with the cream of the crop's travels.
- Follow the campaign trail virtually with MTC's **news feed**. Every day YouTube video and articles from local papers will give you a glimpse of what stump speeches really look and sound like. Just **click the arrow** next to the headline to get started.
- Take a closer look at candidates by **clicking on their names** to the right of the map. You'll get the lowdown on their travels, media coverage, and policy positions.

Click [here](#) to start using Map the Candidates.

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## moneybox

### Inside the Liar's Loan

How the mortgage industry nurtured deceit.

By Mark Gimein

Thursday, April 24, 2008, at 11:25 AM ET

Here's the narrative we've heard about the mortgage meltdown: miscalculation and unfounded optimism, clueless investors, cash-strapped home buyers clobbered by rate resets.

But there's one piece of the mortgage-meltdown tale that virtually every article or television program dances around without ever quite confronting. It's the simplest aspect of the crisis to understand and also the most troubling, because it's not about complicated financial dealings and can't be fixed with bailouts. It's about an astounding breakdown of social norms.

It's the story of the liar's loan.

The term is mortgage-industry slang for what's more formally called a "stated income" mortgage—a mortgage that a lender gives without checking tax returns, employment history, or pretty much anything else. Many of the loans that are in trouble now, or [will be in trouble soon](#), fall into this category. But the term gives only the barest hint of the pervasive failure involved.

The original idea of the stated income mortgage was that it would benefit salespeople who work on commission, people who own their own businesses, and others for whom predicting next year's income isn't just a matter of looking at last year's.

At the height of the mortgage boom, however, especially in pricey markets, the liar's loan became a routine way of doing business; for some lenders—both smaller ones like IndyMac and WMC as well as big ones like Countrywide and Washington Mutual—it was the main way. In 2006 in some parts of the country, these loans made up as much as half of new mortgages, for both subprime borrowers and for homebuyers with high credit scores.

Under ordinary circumstances, we think of lying as something that a few people do. But the nickname "liar's loan" is stunningly apt. The vast majority of the people who took these loans out exaggerated at least a little. *Most* lied a lot. And it's likely that *most* of the liar's loans—including those given to people with excellent credit histories—will go bad.

Think about that for a second. Imagine a city center where running red lights isn't something that the occasional drunken driver or road-rage victim does, but where everybody does it all the time. That's a lot like the mortgage market in big swaths of the country one or two years ago.

Of all the problems in mortgage world, the liar's-loan crash was the most foreseeable. Knowledgeable observers were already sounding the alarm in 2005. But it wasn't until the next year—as lenders were furiously writing ever more such loans—that the hard data started coming in, confirming what everybody who'd stepped into a mortgage broker's office knew.

In 2006, a man named Steven Krystofiak [gave a statement](#) in a Federal Reserve hearing on mortgage regulation, representing an organization called the Mortgage Brokers Association for Responsible Lending. The organization had compared a sample of 100 stated income mortgage applications to IRS records.

More than 90 of the applications overstated the borrower's income at least a little. More strikingly, more than three out of five overstated it by *at least 50 percent*. This isn't a few people fibbing a little. This was the whole system breaking down.

If you lie about your income as much as most borrowers did, you'll wind up with payments that take half or more of your paycheck, a setup for quick foreclosure. Did this concern the lenders who were writing these loans? It boggles the mind to think that they could have been unaware. And yet they continued to write loans under the same terms, racking up supersize loans—and charging customers a little bit more in interest for what amounted to the privilege of lying.

How could they? If you've been following the mortgage story at all, you know the answer: They could take a few hundred or even several thousand of the loans, put them together into a "mortgage-backed security," sell them to investors, and, presto, they were no longer [Countrywide's](#) or Washington Mutual's or IndyMac's problem.

The consequences are predictably depressing. A blogger named Michael Shedlock has done some terrific work tracking the performance of these kinds of loans. Shedlock [analyzed](#) one particular bundle of loans from Washington Mutual consisting of 1,765 mortgages from around May 2007, a total of \$519 million in loans.

These were not "subprime" loans. The borrowers' average credit score was 705, well within prime territory. This is a fairly typical package of loans for a mortgage-backed security, but one thing that does make it stand out is the proportion of these loans that didn't ask for income documents: 88 percent.

Historically, a year into the life of a loan, well less than 1 percent of typical prime loans would be 30 days late or more. By the end of January, when Shedlock first looked at it, just eight months after the loans were made, almost one in five were at least 60 days overdue.

Shedlock looked at it again [two months later](#), at the end of March. The results:

- Eighteen percent of the loans are already in foreclosure—or have already been seized by Washington Mutual.
- *One in four* of this bundle of liar loans is already 60 days past due.

Remember, these are folks with good credit histories—and one in four of them is well on his way to losing his home, or has already lost it.

Think about that city center again. All those cars speeding through those red lights. And crashing.

None of this could have happened without everyone's willing participation. If a car rental agency put up a huge sign saying, "We don't check your driver's license," you wouldn't imagine it really meant anything but "Come on in, we don't care if you have one." The word *fraud* really doesn't conjure up anything close to the real moral or financial reality.

Clearly, amazing degrees of stupidity and mendacity were involved. Some of the sob stories that have come out of the mortgage crisis, unhappy as they are, raise the question: "These folks earned \$3,000 a month and had mortgage payments of \$2,700. Was it so hard to see this was a mistake?"

But consider the position of borrowers in markets where close to half the people taking out mortgage loans were lying. Keep in mind that in some places (for instance, San Diego), half the people in the market were taking out stated income loans and so bidding up prices to points where almost any house became impossible to finance for someone who did *not* lie.

Then try to imagine the broker hovering over your shoulder, like the scientist in some mortgage-world version of the [Milgram Experiment](#). In ordinary circumstances, the people and institutions you deal with reinforce social norms. They say it's *not* OK to lie. But what happens when the structures and institutions break down and start telling you the opposite?

In that case, the honor system that we take for granted goes out the door. You wind up with the situation in many countries—Russia, India, Italy—where, say, not paying taxes is not aberration; it's normal. What might be most worrisome is that once you get to that point, it's hard to get back. You don't just have to restore the structures. You need to restore the norms, too.

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## moneybox

### Ditch the Annual Report!

Corporate America's most-overlooked environmental crime, and how to stop it.

By Daniel Gross

Monday, April 21, 2008, at 6:58 PM ET

It's spring, which in corporate America means it's time for the

annual reports. If you own a few shares of stock, or someone in your house does, you've seen them. Many are beautiful. Most are banal: full of jargon, vague mission statements, and feel-good pictures of smiling customers, spotless manufacturing facilities, and diverse employees. Here's [Merrill Lynch's annual report](#), with several pages of beautiful photography. And here's the [McDonald's](#) annual—68 pages of good times, good food, and good statistics.

It saddens me to say this—especially at a time when people in the word and image trades are suffering—but annual reports are archaic and essentially worthless. Those thuds you hear are hundreds of thousands of meticulously crafted marketing documents being dumped into the garbage can. Given that every American corporation is trying to be greener and save money, it's astonishing that annual reports are still produced.

Once upon a time, annual reports were a necessity. The New York Stock Exchange required companies that listed their stock on the exchange to send every shareholder an annual report—a document offering a state-of-the-company address from the CEO plus crucial operating data. In addition, the Securities and Exchange Commission required companies to send 10-Ks (detailed annual reports shorn of the PR junk) and proxy statements (like 10-Ks but with more information about compensation and the directors up for election). In their day, these were highly useful documents: News organizations would keep collections of them, and professional investors could mine them for insight.

But once information migrated online—the SEC began requiring companies to file 10-Ks and proxies in a free online database in the 1990s—the process of printing these 200-page documents on heavy-stock glossy paper and mailing them seemed to lose its utility. Professional investors, as a rule, junk the lovingly crafted annual reports immediately. Hedge funds, mutual funds, and pension funds have no use for them. SEC filings, quarterly reports, proxy statements, or even Yahoo Finance tell you much more about sales and sales trends, results, stock performance, ownership, and executive compensation. And they're all available online, at the SEC or at company Web sites. Professional investors sit in front of screens all day. Ditto for the media.

Recognizing this, many companies have scaled back their annual reports in the past decade. They have forsaken the high-concept narratives for what's known as a 10-K wrap—taking the no-nonsense 10-K document filed with the SEC and wrapping it in a few pages of content, usually a letter from the CEO. Fifteen years ago, the 10-K wrap was a sign of a corporate hair shirt. In the 1990s, when I interviewed Mel Karmazin, the publicity-shy and frugal CEO of Infinity Broadcasting (and now CEO of Sirius), he boasted that his annual report was nothing more than a 10-K with a cover sheet. Now that's standard practice. According to a survey by the [National Investor Relations](#)

[Institute](#), in 2006 54 percent of companies reported that their annual reports had morphed into 10-K wraps, up from 47 percent in 2004 and 16 percent in 2002. The percentage is certainly higher today. Among their number: [Time Warner](#) and my employer, the [Washington Post Co.](#)

But today, even the regulators seem to agree that the wrap is a profligate use of paper. In August 2006, the NYSE dropped its rule that companies must send hard-copy annual reports to shareholders (though they must still provide a copy of audited financial statements on request). The SEC still requires companies to provide an [annual report](#) to shareholders. But this requirement can be fulfilled with a 10-K or a proxy. Last year, the SEC adopted a new [rule](#) that said companies, instead of mailing 10-Ks and proxies, can make them available on their Web site so long as they send notice of the availability of these documents to shareholders. They must still provide hard copies upon request. (The rule became effective for larger companies as of Jan. 1, 2008, and will apply to all companies starting next January.)

Cutting-edge companies are now junking the mass mailing of both annual reports and 10-Ks. [Invitrogen](#), a biotech company that went public in 1999, printed about 21,000 of its 2006 annual reports—150-page books with 25 pages of glossy stock wrapped around the 10-K. [Amanda Clardy\\*](#), vice president of investor relations, figured that about 90 percent of them went directly into the trash. So this year, it made a [video annual report](#). For the 3,000 (of 30,000 shareholders) who wanted the 10-K sent in the mail, Invitrogen produced a 130-page document on thin paper. By Invitrogen's calculations, the shift saved about 325 trees. Companies such as [California Pizza Kitchen](#) and [Ruth's Chris](#) have also produced video annual reports. Sure, these videos seem more like advertisements and opportunities to project brand image than serious communications about the state of the company. But that's what annual reports have always been.

***Correction, April 21, 2008:** This article originally misspelled the name of Amanda Clardy. ([Return](#) to the corrected sentence.)*

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## movies

### High Treason

*Harold & Kumar Escape From Guantanamo Bay* reviewed.

By Dana Stevens

Friday, April 25, 2008, at 7:02 AM ET

Everything you need to know about the difference between *Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle* (2004) and the just-released *Harold & Kumar Escape From Guantanamo Bay* (New Line) is right there in the titles. The original, a theatrical



flop that found a cult following on DVD, elevated the banal quest for burgers into an improbably inspiring tribute to friendship, spontaneity, racial tolerance, and the problem-solving properties of weed. The sequel takes a far more serious subject—racial profiling and the war on terror—and manages to render it completely banal.

This movie picks up only minutes after the original ended, as post-college roommates Kumar and Harold (Kal Penn and John Cho) recover from the effects of their all-night fast-food journey. (The first of many scatological gags involves the protracted and noisy evacuation of the very sliders Kumar scarfed down at the end of Part 1.) As soon as the boys get those burgers out of their system, they're off to Amsterdam, where Harold plans to follow the girl of his dreams (Paula Garcés) and Kumar plans to get legally baked. But Kumar, ever the king of bad judgment, boards the plane with a smokeless bong—or "bomb," as misheard by one paranoid fellow passenger.

This mix-up, paired with the boys' brown skin (Harold is Korean-American, Kumar of Indian descent) is enough to ground the plane and land them in the clutches of a Department of Homeland Security wing nut (Rob Corddry) who takes their friendship to mean that "al-Qaida and North Korea are working together." The lads are summarily dispatched to Gitmo, from whence—after a depressingly homophobic gag about being forced to fellate their captors—they escape on a raft full of departing Cubans. The rest of the movie is a chase through the Southern United States toward Texas, where a smug college buddy with connections in the Bush administration may be able to clear their names.

Pursued by the Feds, Kumar and Harold careen through the deep South accruing misadventures, most of which involve sex, drugs, or race. Some scenes, like their hooded infiltration of a Ku Klux Klan meeting, strike just the right note of shambling absurdity. But most of the wannabe outrageous racial humor (Corddry's interrogation techniques function on the assumption that Jews will do anything for money, while blacks can be broken by withholding grape soda) is too shallow to constitute real satire. Lamest of all is the moment when, having literally parachuted their way into Bush's Crawford retreat, they wind up getting blazed with the commander in chief. Not only is James Adomian's wax-museum Bush impersonation a far cry from [Will Ferrell's](#), but the warm and fuzzy bonhomie of this scene betrays whatever mildly subversive humor might have preceded it. If smoking pot makes even the guy responsible for Guantanamo into a high-fiving bro, isn't that an insult to the good name of weed?

This may be the worst sin of *Harold & Kumar Escape From Guantanamo Bay*: It betrays the spirit of the stoner comedy, which has traditionally been subversive—when it wasn't detailing the love affair between two marginally functional young men and their stash of sweet, sweet herb. (Last year's

[Smiley Face](#), in which Anna Faris played a solo female stoner, was an underrated exception to the two-guy rule.) Toking up is all the better with that one friend who really gets you—and that friendship, in turn, is burnished by the weed-fueled adventures you share. Cho and Penn's giggly chemistry in the first movie was a celebration of that sacred bond. But not only are Kumar and Harold hardly ever high this time around; they're scarcely on speaking terms. For a good four-fifths of the film, Harold is fuming about Kumar's (admittedly idiotic) sabotage of their Amsterdam trip, and his grudge saddles the movie with a mood of glum sourness. Neil Patrick Harris, reprising a cameo role as his ex-Doogie Howser self, is a welcome diversion—but his character's eventual fate is such a puzzling downer you find yourself wishing, against all your best instincts, for a sequel. *Harold and Kumar Toke Up in Tora Bora?* If you were really, really high, that might be good for a laugh.

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## movies

### Womb Service

Tina Fey and Amy Poehler in the surrogate-mother comedy *Baby Mama*.

By Dana Stevens

Thursday, April 24, 2008, at 12:29 PM ET

*Baby Mama* (Universal) is the most disappointing movie of the year so far—which, granted, isn't saying a lot in mid-April. It's not as if I walked into the screening room all jazzed about the potential brilliance of [Jumper](#) or [Street Kings](#) or [Drillbit Taylor](#). But a Tina Fey/Amy Poehler comedy about surrogate pregnancy, coming at a moment when Fey's career is on a stratospheric climb and popular culture is obsessed with the female reproductive system? Surely this movie was going to be funny—or at least relevant, edgy, and politically provocative. And given the raising of the raunchiness bar in recent comedies, *Baby Mama* seemed likely to offer a rollicking feminist response to the "Can you top this?" school of guy humor.

Instead, *Baby Mama* is a politely bland retread of women's-movie clichés a generation old: the driven businesswoman who puts off motherhood till the last minute, then pursues it with type-A zeal; the guy who flees a first date when babies are mentioned; the down-to-earth potential boyfriend (Greg Kinnear) who, by his very existence, reminds the overly ambitious heroine of what really matters in life. Look, I have fond enough memories of Diane Keaton and Sam Shepard in *Baby Boom*, but that was more than 20 years ago. Have our ideas about working, parenting, and the formation of alternative families really changed so little since 1987?

Part of the problem may be that *Baby Mama* isn't really a Tina Fey movie. It's a Michael McCullers movie, written and directed by the former *Saturday Night Live* writer who also scripted the

*Austin Powers* sequels. McCullers' script isn't a total dud, but it lacks Fey's sharp social insights, and his direction dips into rom-com hackdom (complete with a montage, three-quarters of the way through, in which the main characters mope around missing each other to the strains of a pop ballad).

Kate Holbrook (Fey) is the single, 37-year-old VP of a Whole Foods-like chain of organic grocery stores led by a New Age branding guru (a very funny Steve Martin). Told by a doctor who "doesn't like [her] uterus" (John Hodgman) that she has a one-in-a-million chance of conceiving, Kate takes herself to a high-end surrogacy clinic run by Chaffee Bicknell (Sigourney Weaver), a hyperfertile 50-something who's smugly pregnant with twins. In what seems an uncharacteristically spontaneous move for such a choosy shopper, Kate accepts the first candidate who comes her way, Angie Ostrowski (Poehler), a blue-collar gum-snapper with a bottom-feeding common-law husband, Carl (Dax Shepard in a variant on the slack-jawed yokel he played in [Idiocracy](#)).

After Angie and Carl have a fight, Angie packs up and moves into Kate's poshly appointed apartment, where tiresome high jinks ensue. Angie may or may not be faking the pregnancy. If she is knocked up, the baby may not be Kate's—and if it isn't, she may not be willing to hand it over after the delivery. All this could have been the springboard to investigating (or wickedly satirizing) some of the issues surrounding surrogacy, which, as this excellent *Newsweek* piece [reported](#), can be a minefield for class, race, and gender tensions. But the conflict between Kate and Angie rarely rises above *Odd Couple* level: Organic pea soup or Tastykakes? Touchy-feely birthing videos or *American Idol* karaoke?

Fey and Poehler make ideal comic foils on *SNL*: the dry, brainy, self-contained brunette and the saucer-eyed, floppy-limbed, live-wire blonde. But they can't escape the trap set by these narrowly imagined characters. Poehler's Angie in particular seems only half thought-out—a free-floating stereotype unanchored to reality. What, if anything, did she and Carl do for a living before the surrogacy job came along? How does she feel about the baby that's (maybe) growing in her belly? When Kate calls her "ignorant white trash" in a key scene, why does she respond with "I deserved that"? And when the two women finally do become friends, is there any reason outside the exigencies of the script?

*Baby Mama* is best when it playfully spoofs yuppie culture (I liked the moment at a playground when "Remy and Cheyenne" are summoned for their play date with "Wingspan and Banjo"). Barry, Steve Martin's passive-aggressive hippie CEO, gets the funniest lines by far ("I found this seashell while running barefoot through the Toronto airport"). Is it possible he wrote his own dialogue? The handsome and gifted Romany Malco, whose agent should be fired for not getting him out of these flunky roles, lurks around the edges of the movie as Fey's observant doorman.

*Baby Mama's* overdetermined happy ending—I won't give it away, but you'll know in advance anyway, thanks to half a dozen cues—does the movie's theme a disservice by copping out on the whole notion of alternative family (a condescending term in itself, but that's another matter). As in [Knocked Up](#), what at first appears to be at least a mildly subversive vision of sexual politics soon reverts to an endorsement of heterosexual and biological norms. For all the methods we've invented of making babies—in test-tubes, with turkey basters, in the wombs of other women or even [transmen](#)—Hollywood still prefers its leading ladies to put a rock on their finger and push one out the old-fashioned way.

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## other magazines

### An Infighting Chance

The *New Republic* on Hillary Clinton's intracampaign squabbles.

By Morgan Smith

Tuesday, April 22, 2008, at 2:42 PM ET

#### *New Republic*, May 5

The [cover story](#) reports on the "internecine intrigue" within Hillary Clinton's campaign, and ponders its shift from "highly disciplined machine" to "unruly rock band plagued by dysfunction and public infighting." The former first lady's team is filled with staffers who "distrust, disdain, or even flat-out despise each other," and the "sense of looming loss seems only to feed the fury, as advisers grab for what may be their last chance to right the ship." ... An [essay](#) dissects Barack Obama's 16-month plan for withdrawal from Iraq, observing that it "assumes the many things that could go horribly wrong won't go wrong" and "doesn't seem entirely consistent" with the candidate's statements that he would "consult with 'commanders on the ground'" (who, "as the situation stands," do not recommend withdrawal). ... A [piece](#) traces the erosion of Ralph Nader's reputation in liberal groups. One former Nader collaborator says, "In the public-interest community, he presumes to speak for progressives, and we're left behind cleaning up the shit."

#### *Weekly Standard*, April 28

An [article](#) on Barack Obama argues the Illinois senator resembles Jimmy Carter, "who also tended to believe that talking to America's foes would be enough to bring peace and that America was too often the chief source of the world's problems," rather than the "hawkish cold warrior" John F. Kennedy, with whom he is more often compared. ... An [article](#) examines the 94 percent drop in prison homicides since 1973 despite the yearly increase in inmates criminologists feared would lead to "organizational collapse" and prisons "tense, dangerous, and too weakly governed to prevent high rates of individual and

collective violence." According to the piece, the decline can be explained by a shift to "a hands-on management that focused on collecting 'key indicators' to track all in-house trends over time"—allowing officials to attack violence triggers like gang membership and more heavily prosecute other crimes committed in the prison.

**New York, April 28**

The [cover story](#) lauds *Gossip Girl* as the "most awesomely awesome show ever." The teen drama appeals because it "mocks our superficial fantasies while satisfying them, allowing us to partake in the over-the-top pleasures of the irresponsible superrich without anxiety or guilt or moralizing. It's class warfare as blood sport."... A [feature](#) investigates a "growing schism" in atheist circles. Some nonbelievers think the movement should build "new, human-centered quasi-religious organizations" (in essence, atheist churches) and that "atheism needs to stand for things, like evolution and ethics, not just against things, like God," while others reject any kind of organized belief system. ... A [piece](#) advocates going barefoot, as it explains why, according to a podiatry study, shoes "have warped the pure anatomical form of human gait ... denying it its natural grace of form and ease of movement head to foot."

**Newsweek, April 28**

The [cover story](#) explores why so many Libyans from the coastal town of Darnah have become insurgency fighters in Iraq. Though jihadist recruits are often "in search of redemption," they are "far from being universally motivated by one global ideology... [and] seem to have been driven by personal factors like psychological trauma, sibling rivalry and sexual longing." But in Darnah, they are united by something else: "an almost obsessive devotion to their town's place in history." What may be driving Darnah's young men to jihad is a historic "ideal of armed resistance" that can be traced back to the Mediterranean town's fierce struggle against Italian occupation in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and pride in its role in the Barbary Wars of the 1800s (in which it captured an American warship but was later taken over by U.S. troops). ... A [piece](#) exposes the startling statistic that the suicide rate among doctors is higher than any other profession and points to untreated depression as the cause. According to the piece, physicians fear that if they are diagnosed with a mental illness, "they could lose respect, referrals, income and even their licenses," and though many women are now working in the field, it is "still very much a macho profession; physicians are supposed to be the strong ones who care for the sick, not the sick ones who need to be cared for."

**The New Yorker, April 28**

A [profile](#) of Li Yang, founder of Li Yang Crazy English and the instructor who leads China's quest to teach the language to 50,000 of its Olympic volunteers before the summer games,

divulges that the country "has been in the grip of 'English fever' ... for more than a decade." His method, combined with a "flamboyantly patriotic" ethos, encourages "frenzied crowds" of students to shout English words to induce "total physical response, a kind of muscle memory for the brain." But his students' fervor also reveals "the gap between the English-speaking world and the non-English-speaking world is so profound that any act of hard work or sacrifice is worth the effort." ... A [piece](#) skewers ABC's presentation of the Philadelphia Democratic debates, declaring Charles Gibson "greasily avuncular and patronizing," and noting that "if ever Gibson was in danger of raising the questioning to a level that might actually yield something useful for viewers, George Stephanopoulos ... was by his side to make sure that didn't happen."

**American Prospect, May 2008**

The cover story probes John McCain's foreign-policy record to charge that the Arizona senator, "not Bush, is the real neo-con in the Republican Party." According to the piece, McCain believes "efforts at conflict prevention are fundamentally misguided," because "war is inevitable, so better get it over with as soon as possible." And, despite the hopes of "optimistic liberals" that the candidate has "shown some capacity to change his mind" and has diversified his group of advisers, he "remains as committed to a far-right vision of American foreign policy as ever." ... A piece profiles efforts to draw low-income and minority communities into the mainstream environmental movement through green-collar job programs. This "eco-equity" approach, which combines environmental and social activism, can give people who aren't "white college graduates who drive Priuses and buy organic" an opening in the green movement, while providing economic mobility in access to new jobs.

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**poem**

**"Harmless Poem"**

By Stuart Dischell

Tuesday, April 22, 2008, at 7:51 AM ET

*Listen to Stuart Dischell read .*

Forgive the web without its spider

The houseplant with few or many flowers

And the stars for hiding in the daytime,

Forgive astronauts for distance

And surgeons for proximity,  
Forgive the heart for the way it looks  
Like something a dog eats from a pan,  
Forgive goat-gods and wine-gods  
And the goddess bathing in her pond,  
Forgive the sea for being moody,  
The air for its turbulence, the stomach  
For its vomit, forgive the insistence  
Of sperm, the greeting of the ovum,  
Forgive orgasms for their intensity  
And the faces they make in people's faces,  
Forgive the music of liars, forgive autumn  
And winter and the departure of lovers.  
And the young dead and the persistence  
Of the old, forgive the last tooth and hair.

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politics

## Campaign Junkie

The election trail starts here.

Friday, April 25, 2008, at 6:59 AM ET

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politics

## Slate's Delegate Calculator

Clinton has an estimated 16-delegate lead in Pennsylvania, but we're awaiting final numbers.

By Chadwick Matlin and Chris Wilson

Thursday, April 24, 2008, at 11:54 AM ET

It's been 36 hours, but we still don't know how many delegates Hillary Clinton won in Pennsylvania. [NBC](#) and [CBS News](#) currently have her with a nine-delegate margin with three more to assign. [The New York Times](#) has her ahead by just one

delegate, with 31 left to allocate. [CNN](#), meanwhile, has her up by 12 delegates with eight still up in the air.

For argument's sake, we've given Clinton a 16-delegate advantage in Pennsylvania, which we'll adjust when final numbers come through. This is the margin that a 55-45 split in the vote gives her—the operating assumption of the calculator when the slider is still active.

### Methodology

- The current number of pledged delegates comes from [NBC News' tally](#).
- We estimate the number of delegates based on the overall state vote, even though delegates are awarded by congressional district as well. We felt comfortable making this approximation because in the primaries through Mississippi, there was only a 2.9 percent deviation between the percentage of the overall vote and the percentage of delegates awarded in primaries. The proportion of delegates awarded by congressional district, therefore, does not differ greatly from the statewide breakdown.
- The calculator now includes options to enable Florida and Michigan. When you check the boxes next to either or both states, you'll notice that the overall number of delegates needed for the nomination changes. With Florida and/or Michigan involved, there are more total delegates to go around, so the number needed for a majority rises. Our calculator assumes that the DNC will allow both states to retain their entire pledged delegation, and not punish the states by halving their delegate totals like the RNC did.
- The calculator does not incorporate superdelegates into its calculations. Superdelegates are unpledged and uncommitted and therefore can change their endorsements and convention votes at any time. As a result, we've simply noted at the bottom of the calculator how many superdelegates the leading candidate needs to win the nomination in a given scenario.
- All of the calculator's formulas and data come from Jason Furman, the director of the Hamilton Project at the Brookings Institution.

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politics

## She's Got a Friend in Pennsylvania

Clinton's victory gives her one last shot to wrest the nomination from Obama.

By John Dickerson

Wednesday, April 23, 2008, at 12:35 AM ET



Someone should call a priest, or the *National Enquirer*: Hillary Clinton has now come back from the dead four times. Her win in the Pennsylvania primary wasn't just a numerical victory. It also gave her a new justification for her long-shot effort to win back a nomination that was once considered a lock for her.

Before the votes were tallied, Clinton and her aides were saying, slightly desperately, that her victory would be important no matter what the margin. "A win is a win," they said over and over again. They were clinging to the idea of mathematical certainty, a strategy that made no sense because, in the larger race, it is her opponent who has the ironclad numerical advantage. Barack Obama leads Clinton in delegates, victories, and the popular vote, and it's almost impossible for her to catch up.

That's even truer after tonight. Despite her victory, Clinton's chances of catching Obama among pledged delegates have disappeared. Unless Obama is caught giving all of his campaign cash to Tony Rezko, she's not going to win future contests by a big enough margin to tie him. She narrowed Obama's lead among the popular vote, but not by much. But she won something more important: a new story to tell to superdelegates who are still trying to decide which candidate to back.

In her victory speech, Clinton said, "The tide is turning." Whether that's true will become evident in the coming days. Will the money start coming in, and will the superdelegates stop moving toward Barack Obama? (The campaign says the former has already started, with \$2.5 million raised just since Pennsylvania was called for her.) If those two things happen, she will have stopped the tide, but to reverse it she will need to accomplish the very difficult task of winning over superdelegates who are resistant to the idea of reversing the will of the elected delegates to deny an African-American the nomination.

The only way Clinton can actually reverse the tide is if she can convince those superdelegates that the Pennsylvania victory proved Barack Obama is fundamentally flawed. This is more than an academic exercise. She needs to equip them with a set of arguments so strong that they can weather the violent uproar that will erupt in the base if superdelegates put her over the top.

Clinton has some useful data to mine in the exit polls, particularly about those blue-collar voters we've been watching all election. Obama just can't get to them. He's tried everything: policy changes, bowling, drinking beer, and shelving all talk of arugula. He still lost to Clinton 54-46 among that group. The Clinton team will argue that without these voters, Obama will be like Michael Dukakis, a liberal favorite unable to compete against Republicans in Ohio and Pennsylvania because he can't woo regular people. Obama did win these voters in New Hampshire and Missouri but hasn't won among them since the Wisconsin primary in mid-February.

Clinton has a compounding effect in the numbers. She won by 12 percentage points among those who decided in the last week, a period during which Obama suffered blowback from his characterization of small-town voters and gave a lackluster debate performance. He also went negative in the days before the election, potentially risking his signature attribute: his promise to deliver a new, high-minded kind of politics. Clinton can argue voters looked at Obama's closing performance in the last week and ran from him.

For those still debating whether Obama's [remarks about small-town voters](#) harmed him, the data suggest he hurt himself. Among gun owners, Clinton won 60 percent of the vote. Among small-town voters, she won 59 percent of the vote to Obama's 41 percent. In previous contests, Obama's had a slim 49 percent to 45 percent edge among small-town voters. Clinton also won among religious voters.

As the two candidates spoke at the end of the night, the battle lines for the next stage of the contest were clear. Clinton took the high road, barely mentioning her opponent but promising that she would fight for voters as hard as she's fought for her survival. Obama was sharp-edged. Though he quieted supporters who booed Clinton, saying she had run a good race, he then commenced filleting her. Obama never mentioned his opponent by name but told voters they had a choice: his vision or one that tries to "look tough on national security" (a reference to Clinton's hawkish statements on Iran), uses "fear as a tactic" (a reference to Clinton's last ad), and "says and does whatever it takes to win the next election ... calculate[s] and poll-test[s] our positions [telling] everyone exactly what they want to hear." Obama was making the same argument against Clinton that she is making against him: His opponent is fundamentally flawed. For those in the Democratic Party who are worried that the race has gotten too ugly, it looks like it's going to get even uglier.

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## politics

### The Brokered Convention Is No More

Why the Democrats won't have one.

By Jeff Greenfield

Tuesday, April 22, 2008, at 8:03 AM ET

It is a dream that emerges every presidential cycle, as a gaggle of candidates begin the trek. It grows as polls show no clear leader and the primaries split between the contenders. It has taken on unexpected strength this year because of the realization that neither Sen. Hillary Clinton nor Sen. Barack Obama has any plausible chance of capturing the nomination based on elected delegates by the time the primaries end. And if Clinton wins impressively in Pennsylvania on Tuesday, the dream will sprout new wings.



"Yes!" proclaim the under-60 journalists, sick of their elders' late-night reminiscences of the challenge to George McGovern's California delegation in 1972, or Ronald Reagan's fruitless campaign for Rule 16(c) in 1976. "Yes! We will live to see it—the brokered convention!"

The scenarios are blossoming: Tennessee Gov. Phil Bredesen [conjures a pre-convention convention](#) of undecided superdelegates; *Time* magazine's Joe Klein [imagines the uncommitted supers abstaining](#), thus depriving either contender of a nomination and leading to a Gore-Obama ticket. Former *West Wing* producer and senatorial aide Lawrence O'Donnell Jr. [offers a movie treatment](#) in *New York* magazine that portrays a tough-as-nails Obama besting Clinton by putting Gen. Wes Clark on his ticket.

There's a subtle but important wrinkle in all of this: We may actually have a plausible shot at a *contested* convention this summer, but there's almost no chance at all of a *brokered* convention—mostly because there are no brokers, and there haven't been any for quite a while.

The famous prototype of the old-fashioned brokered convention came out of the Republican race in 1920. There was even a smoke-filled room: suites 408 through 410 of the Blackstone Hotel in Chicago, where a group of political leaders, mostly sitting senators, resolved a nominating impasse and chose silver-haired Ohio Sen. Warren Harding—as predicted by the group's key figure, fellow Ohio politician Harry Daugherty.

Months before the convention—on Feb. 21, 1920, to be precise—Daugherty told the *New York Times*, "About 11 minutes after two on Friday morning at the convention, when 15 or 20 men, somewhat weary, are sitting around a table, one of them will say, 'Who will we nominate?'; At that decisive time the friends of Harding can suggest him, and can afford to abide by the result." After rejecting three other candidates and Massachusetts Gov. Calvin Coolidge, who was considered too progressive, the delegates followed Daugherty and gave Harding the nod on the 10<sup>th</sup> ballot. Coolidge had to make do with the vice-presidential spot.

None of this worked out as hoped. Harding died—of a heart attack, murder, or suicide—in August of 1923, and Coolidge ascended to the office the brokers of 1920 had denied him. Daugherty, who'd become Harding's attorney general, resigned amid the Teapot Dome oil-lease scandals. And the smoke-filled room became the symbol of backroom political chicanery.

Thirty-two years later, it was the Democrats who needed the services of political brokers. President Harry Truman began 1952 with approval ratings of the George W. Bush variety. Tennessee Sen. Estes Kefauver, whose televised hearings into organized crime made him the first TV-spawned candidate, challenged Truman in the New Hampshire primary and beat

him. Truman decided not to run for re-election. Kefauver went on to dominate the primaries. But in those days, most of the delegates were handpicked by governors and mayors, and most of them, especially big-city mayors, had profound antipathy toward Kefauver, whose hearings had exposed links between organized crime and Democratic city machines.

So the party came to Chicago with no clear choice. By one count, 18 credible Democrats were promoted for the nomination to one degree or another. And then there was Adlai Stevenson, the squeaky-clean governor of Illinois, whom Truman had unsuccessfully tried to entice into the race. After Stevenson dazzled the delegates with his welcoming speech ("Where we have erred, let there be no denial, where we have wronged the public trust, let there be no excuses. Self-criticism is the secret weapon of democracy. ..."), the effort to draft him grew. After Chicago Democratic boss Jake Arvey persuaded Stevenson to put his name into contention, the mayors and governors closed ranks. Stevenson won on the third ballot.

In the years since, there have been plenty of conventions at which the result was contested, but it's hard to find a genuine example of political leaders brokering the convention to determine the nominee among themselves. At the 1960 Democratic Convention, for example, Chicago Mayor Richard Daley and Pennsylvania Gov. David Lawrence provided critical support for Sen. John F. Kennedy over Lyndon Johnson and also over Adlai Stevenson, Lawrence's political hero. But the Massachusetts senator had come to the convention with the lion's share of delegates, and he had demonstrated his political chops by winning seven primaries, including a landslide victory in the heavily Protestant state of West Virginia, reassuring fellow Democrats that he could be elected as a Catholic. Party bigwigs like Daley and Lawrence didn't broker the choice; they ratified it. As Theodore H. White wrote in his classic [The Making of the President 1960](#), "As Caesar, after he had conquered Gaul, used the Gallic cavalymen to mop up Pompey and the ensuing civil wars of Rome, so now was Kennedy using the big-city bosses to mop up Stevenson." (They don't write political journalism like that anymore.)

No party boss decided the raucously contested Democratic conventions in 1968 and 1972, either—both involved a straight-up clash of candidates and delegates. McGovern got to seat his winner-take-all California delegation in 1972 simply because he had more delegates. In 1976, when Reagan almost wrested the nomination from President Ford at the Republican Convention, it was the power of Ford's incumbency, along with his concessions to conservatives—dumping Vice President Nelson Rockefeller from the ticket, for example—that gave him his narrow victory.

What about the prospects for a brokered convention this time? Assume for a moment that Clinton wins big in Pennsylvania and then goes on to do well enough in the last set of primaries to erase Obama's lead in the popular-vote count. Imagine that she

also leads Obama in head-to-head national polls and matches up better against John McCain. Then throw into the mix the likelihood that Obama still leads among pledged delegates.

This would seem an ideal scenario for a brokered convention—except, who are the brokers? Which political leaders can deliver pocketfuls of delegates? The short answer is, no one. The undecided superdelegates control exactly one vote each (or half a vote)—their own. The idea that a cohort of these folks will unify calls to mind the difficulty of herding cats. To be sure, dozens of House superdelegates will listen to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, but the politics of their districts—or their key financial supporters—are likely to matter a lot more to them. As for National Chairman Howard Dean, his office comes with few if any powers of persuasion. Even its fundraising pales in comparison with the party's senatorial and congressional campaign committees, and Dean's political clout has so far proven nonexistent. Al Gore clearly has the respect of his party, but many of the brokered convention fantasies revolve around him as the ultimate nominee, not kingmaker.

In other words, if the Democratic Party finds itself gathering in Denver without an obvious nominee, the process of picking one will make the brokered conventions of the past seem models of efficiency. And even if you could somehow find the brokers, where would they gather? With all the ordinances and clean-air talk today, there's not a single smoke-filled room to be found.

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## politics

### Clinton's Closing Argument

Watching Hillary make her final pitch to Pennsylvania voters.

By John Dickerson

Monday, April 21, 2008, at 10:48 PM ET

**Pittsburgh**—Hillary Clinton wants voters to think Barack Obama has lost his cool. First, she argued that Obama's lackluster performance in the last debate meant he couldn't handle pressure. Then, she and her husband, Bill, [suggested he was a whiner](#) because Obama pointed out that the first 40 minutes of the debate had not focused on policy issues. Now, the day before the crucial Pennsylvania primary, Clinton released a new ad that asks which candidate can "stand the heat" of the presidency. The spot uses a montage of threatening images—from Osama Bin Laden to the Pearl Harbor bombing—to represent the threats America faces. The ad was an echo of Clinton's earlier 3 a.m. [phone call ad](#). This time, the narrator asks: "Who do you think has what it takes?"

The Pennsylvania primary is crucial to Clinton's slim chance of survival; still, this ad may be as much about the next contests as

about this one. The Clinton campaign seems confident about the outcome Tuesday. Usually campaign aides downplay their candidate's chances so that a win seems all that much more wonderful. But this time, the candidate and her aides are letting on that they're confident, which means they think they're not just going to win, but win by a margin large enough so that they won't have to spend Wednesday insisting on its magnitude.

On the stump Monday, Clinton looked relaxed. She spent her last day before the biggest remaining primary hop-scotching by plane across the state giving abbreviated versions of her stump speeches and telling audiences to go to her Web site for more.

The day started at the [Scranton Cultural Center](#), a neo-Gothic former Masonic Temple, where she told of the values of family, faith, and hard work she had learned during long family holidays spent by Lake Winola. She was regularly interrupted by chants of "Madame president!" and "One day to victory!" When a woman holding a "Hillary We Have Your Back" sign yelled out, Clinton responded, "I appreciate you having my back, and as your president I'll have your back." The crowd of 400 or so went wild.

Throughout the day, Clinton made only oblique references to her opponent, never mentioning him by name. "Some people say 'yes, we can,' but that doesn't mean we will," she said referring to Obama's signature line. "I'm saying *yes we will*." Candidates often spend the day before the vote sounding a positive note. Clinton had an extra incentive to stay sunny since her campaign aides were working to paint Obama's recent negativity as a weakness. (Obama didn't attack Monday, either; both candidates are still running television ads attacking each other.)

With a win in Pennsylvania likely, Clinton aides are preparing to frame the victory as a ratification of her "Who do you think has what it takes?" message (whether voters actually saw the last ad or not). It's the claim Clinton aides made after Hillary won the popular vote in Ohio and Texas. They argued those outcomes validated their ad showing Clinton was prepared to handle a late-night emergency phone call. Now, they're likely to add that Obama's rough patch in the last week of the Pennsylvania campaign means the crisis-testing scenario is not so hypothetical: Pennsylvania voters saw how Obama reacted to his poor debate performance and the pressure of the campaign, and they determined that he couldn't take the heat.

The most recent proof of Obama's panic, say Clinton aides, is his [recent aggressive turn](#). Beyond just claiming that Obama is a hypocrite for attacking when he claims to occupy the high road, Clinton campaign aides are also trying to argue that his sharp new tone suggests a lack of even temperament. Faced with some stumbles and bad poll numbers, he has panicked and squandered his most valuable asset—his appealing call for a new high-minded kind of politics.

No one will listen to Clinton make this case unless she wins big in Pennsylvania. What's the magic margin? That number will be determined by a complicated and unknowable formula composed of press reaction, superdelegate calculations, and the constancy of Clinton's own supporters. Clinton may win by the numbers but not by enough to keep superdelegates from continuing to move to Obama or to keep one of her key supporters from saying she should pack it in. She may win, but Obama may show that he's made in-roads with blue-collar voters, the linchpin voting bloc with which he's had trouble. Obama's bad two weeks puts more pressure on Clinton, in a way, to really rack up the vote totals.

On the other hand, Obama has vastly outspent Clinton in the state and on the airwaves. If he can't put her away after spending all that money or woo blue-collar voters or women after targeting them, it might suggest these are fundamental liabilities for him, as the Clinton team has been reiterating for all these weeks. Every other state so far has failed to deal the definitive blow that would end this race. Why should Pennsylvania be any different?

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## politics

### Pledge Hedge

My quest to discover whether I could break my pledge to be an Obama delegate.

By Cynthia Baughman

Monday, April 21, 2008, at 3:19 PM ET

My name is on the Pennsylvania primary ballot as a delegate candidate pledged to Barack Obama. I will be competing for one of six delegate spots allotted to my congressional division, the [6<sup>th</sup> District](#). It's a gerrymandered swing district composed of wealthy Philly suburbs, Amish farm country, and the diverse cities of Norristown, Pottstown, and Reading. The vote at the top of the ticket on April 22 will determine how many delegates Clinton and Obama win here. The vote for 11 individual pledged delegates will then determine who fills the spots won by the candidates. I'm hoping Obama wins a slew of delegates, and that I'll get enough votes to be one of them. Voting in Denver for Barack Obama as my party's nominee for president would be the peak of my humble career as a [grassroots activist](#) and [Democratic committeewoman](#)—an effort that consists mostly of attending meetings in fire-station social halls, planting yard signs, manning a rural poll with my friend Rita, and pestering my neighbors with GOTV phone calls during dinner.

But that's where this whole pledged-delegate thing gets sticky. Because over the past weeks, as the delegate math has swung against Clinton, her campaign has floated the notion that pledged delegates won by Obama might consider switching their votes.

"As you know so well, Mark," Clinton said in an [interview](#) with *Time's* Mark Halperin, "every delegate with very few exceptions is free to make up his or her mind however they choose. We talk a lot about so-called pledged delegates, but every delegate is expected to exercise independent judgment." Which got me wondering whether the various formal pledges I'd signed in my quest to be an Obama delegate really mattered: If elected, could I vote for Clinton, anyway? Was I legally bound? Morally obligated? Am I truly in a position to break the one promise I will ever make to voters?

The [Democratic National Committee's "Delegate Selection Rules"](#) and the ["Delegate Selection Plan"](#) of the [Pennsylvania Democratic Party](#) seem to leave room for pledged delegates to change their minds: "Delegates elected to the national convention pledged to a presidential candidate shall in all good conscience reflect the sentiments of those who elected them." So pledged delegates are not bound to the sentiments expressed by the voters *at the time they cast their votes*. Presumably, if the delegate, in good conscience, believes the sentiments of those who elected her have changed, she might, in good conscience, vote for the people's *current* choice. (No one can *force* the delegate to adjust to changing popular opinion, however. Both the DNC and the Pennsylvania rules state that "[n]o Delegate at any level of the delegate selection process shall be mandated by law or party Rules to vote contrary to that person's presidential choice as expressed at the time the delegate is elected.")

I can see how the Clinton campaign could think that under these rules, pledged delegates might be flipped. Then again, to run as a pledged delegate in Pennsylvania, I not only had to file a pledge form with the Democratic Party here, I also had to sign and date the following delegate's statement on about 50 copies of my nominating petitions:

I hereby declare to the voters of my political party in the District set forth above, that if elected, and in attendance as a Delegate or Alternate Delegate to the National Convention of my Party, I shall with all fidelity, to the best judgment and ability, in all matters coming before the Convention, support the Candidate for President of the United States whose name is set forth above, and shall use all honorable means within my power to aid in securing the nomination for such Candidate for President of the United States.

The name set forth above was not Hillary Clinton. And as I knocked on neighbors' doors last January, trying to keep the ink in my pens from freezing, shivering on icy front steps as skeptical citizens scrutinized my petitions, I took that pledge very seriously. But is it binding?

I called Jonathan Marks, chief of the Bureau of Elections and Precinct Data at the [Pennsylvania Department of State](#). Back in January, he'd ably advised us candidates through the petition process. Marks explained to me this week that the delegate selection process is covered by a mix of Pennsylvania election law and party rules. He pointed me to the relevant statutes but said I would have to call the Pennsylvania Democratic Party for a definitive answer to my question. The Pennsylvania Democratic Party staffer I called told me that pledged delegates are *not* legally bound to their expressed preference, but when I asked him about the signed pledge on my petitions, he said he'd never seen it, didn't know anything about it, and suggested I call the DNC in Washington, D.C. The DNC in Washington suggested I call my state party.

My next stop was my friend attorney Phil Kircher. Phil is a commercial trial lawyer at the Philadelphia firm [Cozen O'Connor](#), and he cautioned that he is not a specialist in election law. He did pore over the relevant Pennsylvania statutes and concluded that when I signed that pledge, I was not only making a morally binding promise to the voters, I was also making a legally enforceable pledge. "According to Pennsylvania Law, any unsworn statement that is provided to authorities is subject to the laws of perjury," Phil said. He added, "The pledge says 'I shall with all fidelity. . . .' *Shall* is what we call a mandatory term; it means that you must do this. I think that this pledge is a statement that you are in this for the long haul and that you can't change your mind."

Phil reminded me again that he is not an election lawyer and suggested I call the [Committee of Seventy](#), a venerable Philadelphia nonprofit dedicated to ethical government and clean elections. Sarah Stevenson, an attorney at the Committee of Seventy, had just finished writing a comprehensive and useful [FAQ](#) on delegates for the committee's Web site. Yet when I asked her about the pledge I signed, she said that she was "alarmed," because she had never heard of this pledge on the petitions. It was becoming clear to me that the only people who'd heard of it are delegate candidates, petition signers, and the Department of State employees who handle these petitions. (It cannot be found on the Web sites of the DNC, Pennsylvania Democratic Party, or the Pennsylvania Department of State.) Stevenson was happy to examine a scan of my petition and review the Pennsylvania statute that mandates the pledge. The statute provides that all committed delegates sign and date a "Delegate's Statement" on each sheet of his or her nominating petitions, and that the statement shall be in substantially the form of the pledge I had signed.

Stevenson followed up: "After a quick search, I found one case that addresses this issue (from 1984) which *seems to imply* the pledge is enforceable. The case involved delegates who wanted to switch their commitments—formally, by re-filing delegate statements—from two other candidates to Gary Hart after their candidates dropped out. Relying on state election code filing

deadlines and petition requirements, the court did not require the secretary of state to honor the new filings."

Stevenson later wrote, "In my heart of hearts—in other words, my gut instinct with only a minor review of the law—I don't think the pledge is legally enforceable. Binding someone to a particular future action seems really objectionable to me. As a practical matter, it obviates the need for delegates—Pennsylvania seats can just be marked 'Obama' or 'Clinton' and an actual person need not attend the convention and vote."

But then Phil tells me, "I have to disagree with Sarah here. That commitment is plain English, and you're saying to the people who signed the petition that you will vote for Obama at the convention. When your name is placed on a ballot, the law requires that the words *committed* are next to it, and when people go in and vote, they are relying on the fact that you are committed."

Stevenson suggested I contact Gregory Harvey, a pre-eminent election law expert in Philadelphia, who successfully argued the 1984 pledge case. Harvey e-mailed this response to my query over whether or not my pledge is enforceable, "How are you defining 'enforceable?' Enforceable by a court order on the eve of the Convention? Enforceable by a ruling of a party committee rejecting a delegate vote cast contrary to the pledge? Enforceable by a civil action for money damages brought by a disappointed primary voter after the Convention? None of these remedies seem practicable." Still, his question suggests to Phil that an enterprising voter "might be able to sue and get a mandatory injunction to force you to honor your pledge."

So it seems I have signed a pledge that may or may not be a promise that may or not be enforceable, although few people even know of the pledge in the first place and fewer can direct me to any definitive ruling on the subject.

"Isn't it kind of crazy?" I ask Phil. "Our primary is on Tuesday, the whole country is obsessed with it, and yet no one can say how binding it is?" In a March meeting with the editorial board of the [Philadelphia Daily News](#), Hillary Clinton [said](#), "Remember that pledged delegates in most states are not pledged. You know there is no requirement that anybody vote for anybody. They're just like superdelegates." The paper affirmed her claim, citing only the DNC and state Democratic Party rules. Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell and T.J. Rooney, chair of the Pennsylvania Democratic Party, are [superdelegates](#) pledged to Clinton, and the [executive director](#) of the Pennsylvania Democratic Party has taken a leave to run the Clinton campaign here. None of these party leaders seems to know or to have told their candidate that exhorting Pennsylvania pledged delegates to change their vote might be tantamount to exhorting them to break Pennsylvania law.



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## politics

# Obama's Closing Argument

Watching Obama try to convince Pennsylvanians.

By John Dickerson

Monday, April 21, 2008, at 9:14 AM ET

**READING, Pa.**—Barack Obama said he'd come to Reading, Pa., two days before the state's crucial primary to "deliver his closing argument." For over an hour he spoke and took questions, but the words that will be remembered from the event were the ones he tossed off at the very end, almost in passing. "All three of us will be better than George Bush," he said of the remaining presidential candidates. Since he'd been arguing that McCain would represent a disastrous third Bush term, this little slip muddled the closing argument he'd just given and offered Hillary Clinton an opportunity she would surely grab.

Clinton immediately performed her role in the pantomime. "We need a nominee who will take on John McCain, not cheer on John McCain, and I will be that nominee," she said referring to Obama's remarks. This is proof that you don't have to be a member of the press to get accused of loving John McCain the wrong way. Those with a demitasse worth of recall will remember that by the Clinton standard she, too, has been a cheerleader for McCain. Not that long ago she claimed that while Barack Obama had not passed the "commander in chief test" necessary to become president, John McCain had. Bill Clinton [also spoke highly of McCain](#) recently.

The crowd of a couple thousand in the Reading High School gymnasium probably didn't take note of Obama's little slip about the GOP nominee. They seemed incapable of seeing any flaws in the man. Even by Obama standards, they were frenzied. A suit of armor representing the school mascot stood on a high platform at the back of the gym. When Obama walked in, the crowd cheered so loudly, I thought the thing would spring off its perch.

As Obama talked, people interrupted him with cheers and exclamations. Everything seemed to prompt an outburst. He told the audience about the 35,000 people who attended one of his recent rallies, and before he could describe the location, a woman screamed from the crowd "in Philadelphia." When he mentioned that the campaign had been going on so long that some babies have been born and can now walk, parents thrust their children—even surprised toddlers—into the air. Because the gymnasium was filled with basketball hoops and because the proud parents vaulted their children with such gusto, they all looked like they were trying to heave their little darlings up to make a last shot before the buzzer.

Sometimes a passage of the speech that might not seem that exciting would cause a member of the crowd to stand up and wave and flap his arms like he'd been called to be a contestant on *The Price Is Right*. "This is a feisty crowd," said Obama. "What did you all eat this morning?" This only encouraged them. Obama had to wait for the mayhem to subside before he could get back to his remarks.

It was, to quote Hillary Clinton, a "[whoop-de-do](#)" event.

Obama's final argument, as articulated in Reading and later Sunday night in Scranton, is not that different from the argument he's been making for months, with the notable exception of a passage now devoted to cutting Hillary Clinton down to size. Here's how the speech goes:

**Declaration of Independence:** Obama says that the 35,000-person rally in downtown Philadelphia reminded him of the founders who gathered nearby and their improbable quest. "We have to stand up the way those founders stood up," he says. "Now is our moment. This is our time."

**Why he's running:** Quoting Martin Luther King, Obama declares the "fierce urgency of now" before outlining America's foreign and domestic problems. (Here he cites job loss statistics in the local area. Message: I know what the blue-collar voters I'm having trouble attracting are going through.) "In such circumstances we can't wait," he says.

**We can't fix anything until we change our politics:** There are plenty of good solutions to our problems, but lobbyists block them. The cynical game in which politicians tear each other down is equally corrosive. In the Founders analogy, the special interests and cynics play the role of George III.

**George Bush won't be on the ticket:** If anyone in the crowd has stopped being excited, this passage offers a chance for everyone in the audience to blow out whatever remains of their vocal chords.

**But McCain will be on the ballot:** Boos. "I respect his service," says Obama. Applause. In Scranton late Sunday night, Obama asked: "You know what John McCain's problem is?" An audience member yelled, "He's too old." Obama responded immediately: "No, no, that's not the problem. There are a lot of wise people. ..." That's another assist for McCain—and also classy. Obama could have let that slide.

**There is a choice in the primary:** This is the Hillary-bashing section of the speech. Clinton is captive to the lobbyists whom she defends. Obama then runs through how her various evasions on NAFTA, Mark Penn and Colombia, and the Iraq war represent typical Washington cynicism. She will do and say anything to get elected, he charges. This long section bends ([and](#)



[sometimes breaks](#)) his high-minded new politics message. Sensing this contradiction in Reading, he said, "Our campaign is not perfect, but you get elbowed enough, and you start to elbow back."

**Obama will tell people hard truths (unlike Hillary):** 94.3 percent of the time Obama never really tells the audiences anything uncomfortable though he boasts that he will 100 percent of the time. What he promises them instead is to tell people they don't like (auto executives and Wall Street fat cats) what *those groups* don't want to hear. In Reading, however, Obama was a truth-teller. A local activist stood and asked what he would do to end the zero-tolerance policies for those who deal and use drugs in public housing. Obama could have wiggled around the question. Why tick off a local activist before election time? Instead he told the woman, "I'm sympathetic [to those who are evicted] but not that sympathetic." If you want a break on public housing, you can't mess with drugs, Obama told her. The audience loved it.

**History of hope:** As he concludes, Obama answers the criticism that his message of hope is naive with a tour through American history, citing the achievements—from ending slavery to equality for women—brought about by hope. "If those colonists had listened to the naysayers who say you can't defeat the British, where would we be?" he asked the crowd in Scranton. Pointing to Caroline Kennedy, who introduced him in Scranton, he said, "When Caroline Kennedy's father looked up at the moon, he didn't say, 'Oh that's too far.' "

The Obama pitch has been remarkably consistent over the months. Without notes, he can now produce it with very little deviation from stop to stop. Depending on how he does in Pennsylvania on Tuesday, he may finally get a chance to write a new speech.

Posted Monday, April 21, at 9:15 a.m.

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## politics

### Barack Track

Riding the rails with Sen. Obama in Pennsylvania.

By John Dickerson

Saturday, April 19, 2008, at 2:26 PM ET

**DOWNINGTOWN, Pa.**—At the next train stop, I'm going to stand behind Sen. Obama when he speaks. When he's decrying the trivial distractions in politics, I think he may be crossing his fingers behind his back.

As the senator's campaign train wound from one speech where he denounced tit-for-tat politics to the next speech where he

denounced tit-for-tat politics, his campaign hosted a conference call to engage in the practice the candidate was busy denouncing. I suppose it would have been an even greater act of chutzpah for the Obama campaign to host the conference call *while* Sen. Obama was denouncing that kind of behavior, but not much more of one.

Obama campaign aides scheduled the call to talk about Hillary Clinton's fantastical story about her breakneck race to shelter under sniper fire during a visit to Bosnia. You might think this would be the last story the Obama campaign would be pushing because in Wednesday's debate, the senator mistakenly suggested his campaign had only discussed the issue because reporters had brought it up—not because they were trying to take advantage of Clinton's extended work of fiction. To push the story again now would make Obama look even more insincere about that claim.

In the same debate, Obama also suggested the story was pretty much off-limits. When asked about Clinton's Bosnia problem, he said this: "I think Sen. Clinton deserves, you know, the right to make some errors once in a while. ... I think what's important is to make sure that we don't get so obsessed with gaffes that we lose sight of the fact that this is a defining moment in our history ... for us to be obsessed with this—these kinds of errors I think is a mistake. And that's not what our campaign has been about."

On his train tour Saturday, Sen. Obama continued to condemn the petty distractions that keep Americans from focusing on real issues. He decried Clinton's "tactics of Washington," in which she attacks him with every possible weapon. "She's got the kitchen sink flying, the china flying. The buffet is coming at me ... when we get involved in the constant distractions, the petty tit-for-tat politics ... that may be good for the television ratings, but that's not good for you."

While the candidate was denouncing the distractions, his aides were promoting them. Three veterans of the Bosnia conflict joined for a conference call to explain just how crucial this particular distraction was and why we should ignore Sen. Obama's guidance and get obsessed with this issue.

Maj. Gen. Walter Stewart explained that because Clinton had fabricated on the issue of sniper fire, Clinton would not be able to perform the traditional ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier who, he averred, was undoubtedly killed by sniper fire. "She will lack the moral authority to lay the wreath on Memorial Day," he said. She would also be unable to honor the veterans remembered on the Vietnam memorial because many of them had also been killed by sniper fire. Capt. Aaron Clevestine offered a variation on this theme: "As someone who trained snipers, I take offense to the notion that she was under sniper fire." Michael Kotyk, a retired veteran of the Navy, broadened the significance of Clinton's yarn: "We've had eight

years of dishonor. We need honor. If you're going to tell stories, then you're not displaying honor."

Shortly after the conference call ended, Sen. Obama's train pulled into Downingtown, and he worked the crowd into a frenzy by denouncing the scourge of petty, distracting attack politics.

Posted Saturday, April 19, at 5:35 p.m.

WYNNEWOOD, Pa.—Barack Obama was grinning like a kid when he stepped onto the platform of the antique train car he's riding in today in his four-city tour through central Pennsylvania. He's enjoying the plush comfort of the [Georgia 300](#) lounge car, which is filled with leather upholstery, Tiffany lamps, and embroidered finery. It looks like the perfect set for a [Kenny Rogers vehicle](#). The candidate even has access to a tidy little bedroom with a pink Pullman bedspread and a bathrobe. He won't be napping today, though. The 100-mile trip is packed with stops, and besides, he's not going to give Hillary Clinton any chance to [call him soft again](#). But Obama couldn't resist taking advantage of the train whistle. Boarding at 30<sup>th</sup> Street station in Philadelphia at the start of the journey, he tugged on a cable, and it let out a long, loud wail. "That's too much right there," he said with a broad smile.

At his first stop in Wynnewood, Obama was still basking in the glow of his event the night before in Philadelphia, where 35,000 people had come to see him. A few thousand stood in the bright sunshine by the train platform in the suburban hamlet as Obama took the stage in shirtsleeves.

The speech was similar to the one he's been giving for the last 15 months. He railed against "tit-for-tat politics" and promised to change it. "You do have a choice in this election," he said, painting Clinton as a typical Washington-style politician willing to say and do anything. She "changes positions to suit the politics of the moment," said Obama. Behind me, a man yelled, "Go ahead, Barack."

He alluded only briefly to the debate Wednesday night. "I'm not interested in having debates about flag pins," he said, referring to a question that had touched on his refusal to wear one. "I'm interested in having debates about how we're going to send our kids to college and get our troops home from Iraq."

Obama talked repeatedly about his penchant for truth-telling as a way to contrast himself with his opponent. He was going to tell people what they needed to hear and not what they wanted to hear. This also has been a standard part of the Obama campaign speech, and it's still true that after so many months of promising hard truths, Obama doesn't really force people to accept any. (With the blistering heat, it would have been a great time, say, to

tell the truth about the hard choices we're all going to have to make to combat global warming.)

The crowd didn't mind that Obama wasn't actually telling any hard truths. They roared approvingly throughout his remarks. One 12-year-old girl, Kabira Arnold, ran from the crowd that swarmed around Obama after the speech and screamed, "He hugged me." Her friends collapsed around her as she twirled and danced. After the hug, she told Obama, "You are the best person ever."

Posted Saturday, April 19, at 2:26 p.m.

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press box

## Rupert Murdoch's Favorite Lie

As long as he insists on telling it, I'll keep calling it out.

By Jack Shafer

Thursday, April 24, 2008, at 5:17 PM ET

Rupert Murdoch can't stop telling his favorite lie.

In this week's [Newsweek](#), he claims that he booted the BBC World Service Television from his Star satellite TV system in Asia in 1994 for financial reasons, not for its China coverage.

The article also quotes from a note Murdoch sent to *New York Times* Publisher Arthur Sulzberger Jr. taking issue with a [Times editorial](#) that touched on the matter. "I don't know how many times I have to state that I didn't take off the BBC," Murdoch wrote.

It's a lie, and the [genocidal tyrant](#) knows it. Here's how a cross section of the press reported the BBC's eviction from Star, which he bought in late 1993:

Especially sensitive is the matter of the BBC World Service news channel carried by Star TV, which has broadcast reports embarrassing to the Chinese government.

A ... contract prohibits Star from dropping the BBC, but Murdoch is trying to negotiate a deal that would substitute documentary and educational programming for the British news service.

—*Los Angeles Times* (Feb. 13, 1994)

Rupert Murdoch says the British Broadcasting Corp. could lose its spot on his Star TV satellite network unless it addresses bias charges leveled by India and China.

Murdoch told reporters in New Delhi that he is inclined to replace the BBC with his own Sky TV news channel to improve the overseas image of both countries as well as to seek better ties with them.

"That may be a solution that we may have to come to," Murdoch said. "We have a legally binding contract with the BBC. We would hope that we can resolve most of these complications with them before taking such a drastic step as that."

—*Media Daily* (Feb. 15, 1994)

Mr Murdoch has made several trips to China since and the Chinese leadership has wasted no time publicising his efforts to placate it. A month ago Guo Baoxing, of China's Ministry of [R]adio, Film and TV, said Beijing had told Star to drop the BBC world service which is carried on one of their five channels. The BBC has offended China by producing and airing a documentary on Mao Zedong, a few minutes of which mention that he enjoyed sexual encounters with young women. The Chinese also got a bit upset when the BBC aired graphic pictures of the Tiananmen Square massacre near its anniversary.

This week it was confirmed that Star is doing just what the Chinese asked.

—the *Sun-Herald* of Sydney, Australia (March 20, 1994)

Last year the outspoken mogul declared that satellite television was "an unambiguous threat to totalitarian regimes everywhere." A month or so later the Chinese government clamped down on the installation of satellite dishes.

Dumping the BBC ... appears to have been Mr. Murdoch's penance. Seldom has he let ideology stand in the way of profits; nor is he especially fond of the BBC. Recently he told *The Economist* that the BBC caused him "lots of headaches" with a number of Asian governments—especially the one in Beijing—because of its critical news coverage.

—the *Economist* (March 26, 1994)

It became increasingly clear that News Corp. regarded the BBC news service as a political liability in Star's quest to develop better relationships with a number of Asian governments, notably the Communist regime in China.

—*Variety* (March 28, 1994)

Once the BBC had been dumped, a Murdoch minion categorically denied that politics had anything to do with it, as this next clip illustrates.

Satellite broadcaster STAR-TV, owned by media mogul Rupert Murdoch, denied reports that it bowed to political pressure in deciding to beam Mandarin-language movies instead of a BBC news channel into China. Gary Davey, STAR-TV chief executive, told reporters commercial considerations and a lack of capacity on the northern beam of the Asiasat-1 satellite led it to scrap BBC World Service Television.

—*USA Today*, international edition (March 23, 1994)

Murdoch abandoned this lie just a few months later, coming clean in a British *Esquire* (July 1994) interview. Here's how the June 14, 1994, *Wall Street Journal* reported it:

Rupert Murdoch, chairman of News Corp., despite earlier denials by his media companies, has acknowledged months after the fact that he yanked British Broadcasting Corp. news from his satellite television service in northern Asia in hopes of soothing bad relations with China.

... Mr. Murdoch said he made the decision to pull BBC, even though "I was well aware that the freedom fighters of the world would abuse me for it."

Mr. Murdoch told author William Shawcross that cutting out the BBC was critical to Star's acceptance in China. "They hate the BBC," Mr. Murdoch said. "Critics say it's a cowardly way, but we said that in order to get in there and get accepted, we'll cut the BBC out."

Murdoch stuck with the embarrassing truth for a decent interval. "The BBC was driving [the Chinese leaders] nuts," Murdoch told Ken Auletta in a Nov. 13, 1995, *New Yorker* piece. "It's not

worth it." He added, "We're not proud of that decision. It was the only way."

As best as I can tell, Murdoch didn't return to the corporate lie until 2007, when he told the *Financial Times* that the BBC's defenestration was just business. He said:

Star was losing \$100m per year; we had to pay \$10m per year to the BBC. I said "Let them pay it themselves", and they did. We also cancelled two other third-party channels—MTV and Prime Sports. At that stage we never ever had any request from anybody in China. Indeed, there was no discourse at all.

—*Financial Times* (May 24, 2007)

*Newsweek* isn't the only place Murdoch is trafficking his fib this month. In a Georgetown University [speech](#), he told students and faculty that unplugging the BBC was all about commerce, saying:

The BBC has a lot more money than I; they can get their own transponder and their own satellite. And that was taken as me kowtowing to the Chinese government. And I've had that hung around my neck forever.

Murdoch lies because he has no shame. Last summer, *Time's* Eric Pooley asked the rotten old bastard about a few of his disgraces. What did he have to say today about having [ordered](#) three *New York Post* journalists to investigate a competitor back in 1984—not to write a story but to assist a Murdoch lawyer in deposing the competitor? "I don't recall it. ... But if we did it, we were wrong." Or of the spiking of a memoir of the last British governor of Hong Kong, who was detested by the Chinese government Murdoch has so labored to placate? "I was probably in the wrong there too."

"It's been a long career, and I've made some mistakes along the way. We're not all virgins," Murdoch told Pooley.

Speak for yourself, Rupert.

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Today marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of the "[Hitler Diaries](#)" by Murdoch's London *Times*. (FYI: *Newsweek* also published from the diaries. Both it and *Slate* are owned by the Washington Post Co.) When Murdoch publishes his own diaries, what should he call them? *The Filth and the Fury*? Send your nominations to [slate.pressbox@gmail.com](mailto:slate.pressbox@gmail.com). (E-mail may be quoted by name in "The Fray," *Slate's* readers' forum, in a future article, or elsewhere unless the writer stipulates otherwise.)

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## sidebar

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### Rupert Murdoch, Genocidal Tyrant?

To the best of my knowledge, nobody ever called Rupert Murdoch a genocidal tyrant until he introduced the useful image in a summer 2007 conference call. Here's how the [Washington Post](#) reported it.

Rupert Murdoch wanted the *Wall Street Journal* badly enough to endure a summer's worth of hurt feelings.

"That's ... why I spent the better part of the past three months enduring criticism that is normally leveled at some sort of genocidal tyrant," the 76-year-old global media tycoon said yesterday during a conference call on News Corp.'s fourth-quarter results. "If I didn't think it was such a perfect fit with such unlimited potential to grow on its own and in tandem with News Corp. assets, believe me, I would have walked away."

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## press box

### Don Corleone Murdoch?

In which *Newsweek* alleges that Norm Pearlstine and John Huey kissed the godfather's ring.

By Jack Shafer

Wednesday, April 23, 2008, at 6:37 PM ET

Rupert Murdoch added girth to his distending legend this week by all but sewing up a deal for *Newsday* and squeezing out of the *Wall Street Journal* the top editor he inherited.

While Murdoch may stride the planet like a ravenous, mythic beast, can you believe every ripping yarn you read about him? Take, for instance, the opening anecdote in the [4,100-word](#) profile *Newsweek* published about the media baron on Monday. The story portrays Time Inc. editorial executives Norman Pearlstine and John Huey as slavering supplicants in a May 2005 visit to Murdoch's Manhattan headquarters.

Pearlstine, then editor in chief of Time Inc., and Huey, editorial director, were fighting a grand jury subpoena of a *Time* magazine reporter and internal e-mails in the Valerie Plame investigation. The company had petitioned the Supreme Court to review the case, and the pair visited Murdoch and his lieutenants to ask for News Corp.'s editorial support of their appeal.

*Newsweek's* Johnnie L. Roberts writes that Pearlstine and Huey realized that they might have to

cross that most sacrosanct journalistic line: revealing their reporter's confidential source—who in this case happened to be Vice President Dick Cheney's chief of staff, I. Lewis (Scooter) Libby. So they called on Murdoch to seek support for their legal position, recalls Pearlstine. Huey says they were also looking for a promise of a restrained response from Murdoch's minions if it were necessary to out the confidential source. They didn't want to land on the [Murdoch-owned] *New York Post's* front page with their heads superimposed on rats, for instance (such is the power of the *Post* over Manhattan's media elite). "Done," Murdoch said quickly, to the surprise of the editors.

It's a great image, one that expands Murdoch's distended legend all the way to bloated: Murdoch, godfather of media, holding court and dispensing favors; Pearlstine and Huey, princes of media themselves, begging the great man not to cast a News Corp. spell on them and turn them into rats; Murdoch startling the pair by saying, "Done," like a monarch, dictator, or gang leader.

But Pearlstine and Huey dispute three important elements in *Newsweek's* account.

In his 2007 book, *Off the Record: The Press, the Government, and the War Over Anonymous Sources*, Pearlstine writes about meeting with Murdoch and his lieutenants to ask for editorial support of the Time Inc. petition, so that part of the anecdote is undisputed. News Corp.'s *New York Post* ultimately published a soft editorial backing the petition on June 22, 2005.

But Pearlstine says he *couldn't* have asked Murdoch for promises of restraint at the meeting because he was at least a month from making a final decision about the confidential source, and he had made a point of not discussing that option. "I deliberately kept [Huey] in the dark," says Pearlstine. "I never would have brought it up in front of him" at the meeting. Pearlstine says he told Roberts that there was no discussion of turning over the notes at the meeting.

As for the flourish of Murdoch's pronouncement, "Done"?

"He never said anything like that. That's bullshit," says Pearlstine. Huey concurs. Pearlstine says that when he left the meeting, he had no expectation that Murdoch's organization would support the Time Inc. petition.

On the third point, Roberts concedes that he never meant to imply that rats were actually discussed at the meeting. "[R]ather it was meant to illustrate the type of treatment for which the *New York Post* is famous," he e-mails. But besides that clarification, Roberts says he and *Newsweek* stand by his story.

"According to Mr. Huey, they had asked more generally that they not be targeted with mean headline[s] or mocking photos," e-mails Roberts. Murdoch confirmed the version *Newsweek* ran, Roberts states, and Huey confirmed it "on the record at least three times, including Friday, as I was fact checking."

(Roberts urged me to contact Murdoch to confirm his confirmation, but I declined as I have no doubt that this is Murdoch's version.)

Huey contradicts Roberts, denying that any of his conversations or correspondence with Roberts can be read as confirmation of the "restraint" anecdote.

"I know for a fact that we never mentioned mocking headlines or mean headlines to Rupert. And I know we didn't ask about any coverage except to request editorial support," he says in an e-mail.

Roberts accuses Huey of waffling once he learned that Pearlstine was telling a different version of the story and insists there is no way he misunderstood Huey on the three occasions they discussed the meeting. From there, the Roberts-Huey dispute becomes an adamant "he said-she said" tussle. In one possible scenario, Huey told Roberts something that he now regrets and wishes he could take back. In another, Roberts, an [experienced journalist](#), erred in his reconstruction of the meeting.

But the main event is this: Did Pearlstine and Huey roll over and show their bellies to the blood-thirsty dingo at the May 2005 meeting? I accept Pearlstine's version for several reasons. He's not known for submissiveness (quite the contrary), he has a



reputation for honesty, and groveling is the worst business strategy this side of suicide.

And finally, this particular grovel makes no sense. If your two options were to be caricatured as a rat by the *New York Post* and the Fox News Channel for a couple of weeks or held ransom by Rupert Murdoch until the end of time because you pleaded for his mercy, which would you choose?

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But what about Murdoch's confirmation? I'll explore the rotten old bastard's unique relationship with the truth tomorrow. Whom do you believe? Send e-mail to [slate.pressbox@gmail.com](mailto:slate.pressbox@gmail.com). (E-mail may be quoted by name in "The Fray," *Slate*'s readers' forum, in a future article, or elsewhere unless the writer stipulates otherwise. Permanent disclosure: *Slate* is owned by the Washington Post Co.)

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## reading list

### Shakespeare for Everyone

The most interesting books, movies, and Web sites related to the Bard.

By Ron Rosenbaum

Saturday, April 19, 2008, at 12:09 AM ET

America celebrates Shakespeare's birthday this April 23 with a sonnet contest at [the Folger Library](#) and festivities at [New York's Shakespeare Society](#). But as Peter Ackroyd's recent [Shakespeare: The Biography](#) reminds us, we're not sure if April 23 was the day Shakespeare was born or the day his birth was assigned.

Do you care? It's unfortunately typical of the slippery, unresolvable—and often tedious and irrelevant—conflicts of Shakespearean biography. It's sad that some people forgo rereading or watching Shakespeare's plays (have you seen the amazing new [Laurence Olivier boxed set](#), especially the brilliantly iconic, diabolic *Richard III*?) and waste time on such evidence-deprived controversies as the recent dust-up between Germaine Greer in [Shakespeare's Wife](#) and Stephen Greenblatt (initially in [Will in the World](#) over the unanswerable question: Did Shakespeare love his wife? (Greer: Yes. Greenblatt: No. Actual evidence: Nil.)

A rare exception to the futility of biographical Shakespeare is Charles Nicholl's recent [The Lodger Shakespeare: His Life on Silver Street](#). Nicholl, a master at digging up four-century-old actual documentary evidence, focuses on a 1612 lawsuit in which Shakespeare gave testimony that reveals him to have been involved in a dispute over a daughter, a dowry, and a wig-maker he lived with, a veritable French farce originally enacted just at the time (1604) when he was writing some of his greatest tragedies. Nicholl turns the complex reverberations of the lawsuit into a highly entertaining introduction to Shakespeare's London world.

Still, the best guide to centuries of Shakespearean biographical folly remains Samuel Schoenbaum's [Shakespeare's Lives](#), recently reissued (with a foreword by the *Post*'s Michael Dirda), which reveals just how much the fragmentary apocrypha of Shakespearean biography act as a Rorschach on which the biographers project their own fantasies.

Nonetheless, as I sought to demonstrate in [The Shakespeare Wars](#), there are exciting and thought-provoking controversies about Shakespeare to be found, but about the words and the work, not the wife and the life.

Some of the most provocative and insightful "scholars" of Shakespeare are great directors such as the U.K.'s visionary Peter Brook (don't miss his amazing film of [King Lear](#) starring one of the great actors of our age, Paul Scofield), the polemical [Sir Peter Hall](#), and a group of Americans including New York's Brian Kulick and Karin Coonrod, D.C.'s Michael Kahn, and Barry Edelstein, whose book [Thinking Shakespeare](#) is a particularly rewarding exploration of how Shakespearean actors seek to capture the thought behind the words.

Ah, but what are Shakespeare's words? Did he revise them? Perhaps the single most important controversy among academics not mired in the now-antiquated discredited French farce of deconstructionism is the question of what kind of *writer* Shakespeare was. Was he the devil-may-care wastrel of *Shakespeare in Love*, who sent his manuscripts off to the playhouse and then fell to wenching? Or, as a highly influential group of textual scholars have argued, did he care enough about his work as literature to carefully revise some of his most famous works? The latter side of the case is most comprehensively argued by Lukas Erne in [Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist](#). Did he return to *Hamlet* for instance to make changes large and small that cumulatively give us two or more *versions* of that play (and *Lear*, too)?

Recently, the notoriously erudite footnote-laden Arden edition of Shakespeare caused a stir by giving us a unique [three-text Hamlet](#) edited by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor on the carefully argued belief that the three surviving texts of *Hamlet*—the 1604 "Good Quarto," the posthumous 1623 Folio version, and the black sheep "Bad Quarto" (1603)—deserve separate

consideration. (In two versions of *Hamlet* and the two versions of *Lea*, the dying, perhaps defining, words of the tragic heroes differ.)

The best way to experience the duality of the two most substantial *Hamlet* texts is to take a look at the online [Enfolded Hamlet](#), which graphically dramatizes how many small yet telling differences there are and allows you to speculate about why Shakespeare (if it was he—it could have been some actor, printer, or theater manager) made the revisions. And, by the way, what is, to my mind, the best *Hamlet* I've ever seen—a recording of Richard Burton's 1964 Broadway stage performance (directed by the great John Gielgud)—is now out on [DVD](#).

One final plea. I don't want anyone to give up on live productions (see the National Endowment for the Arts [list](#)). But I've long argued that there are certain Shakespearean films that allow one to experience the greatest actors of the past century doing Shakespeare in a way you might not get a chance to see it live in your lifetime. And perhaps the greatest of these is Orson Welles' compression of the two *Henry IV* plays under the title [Chimes at Midnight](#). You can find some [used versions on Amazon](#), but—typical of Welles' output—the only readily available new DVD is a Brazilian edition that I was tipped off about by *Slate* Editor Jacob Weisberg, a fellow enthusiast for the film. He says if you ignore the Portuguese subtitles, the English soundtrack, badly synched as it is, will still leave you astonished and deeply moved. So here's my plea: Could somebody somehow get a remastered version of this masterpiece to market? Without the Portuguese subtitles?

*A version of this article also appears in the Washington Post's "Outlook" section.*

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## recycled Keep Your Roses

I hate Admin Day.

By Melonyce McAfee

Wednesday, April 23, 2008, at 7:10 AM ET

*Today marks the 57<sup>th</sup> annual Administrative Professionals Day, the Wednesday of the last full week of April (Administrative Professionals Week). The office holiday [began](#) in 1952 as National Secretaries Week to "recognize secretaries for their contributions in the workplace, and to attract people to secretarial/administrative careers." In a "Fine Whine" piece published on Administrative Professionals Day two years ago and reproduced below, Melonyce McAfee decries the awkwardness that this "recognition" brings in an era in which the "secretary" may just be the office staff at large.*

Here's a plot line for the writers at NBC's *The Office*: [It's the last Wednesday](#) in April. Paper-salesman Jim presents a bouquet of tulips to his office crush, receptionist Pam. The accompanying card reads: "For all you do. Happy Secretaries Day." Competitive and cringe-inducing boss Michael, until now oblivious to the holiday, sees the card and orders a garish bouquet, large enough to blot out Pam's head and overshadow Jim's arrangement. The bouquet arrives at 4:49 p.m. Eyes roll.

Today is Administrative Professionals Day—the Hallmark holiday that leads to intraoffice jealousy, discomfort, and not much else. Believe me, as an assistant during most of my post-college years, I've shot my share of daggers at the colleague who got eye-popping floral deliveries while I sulked at my keyboard, giftless. The holiday also throws bosses off guard (the reason they have secretaries is to remember stuff like Secretaries Day). Or it lulls them into feeling they've thanked the minions sufficiently for a year's worth of underpaid labor.

The National Secretaries Association got the ball rolling with Professional Secretaries Week in 1952. The holiday was renamed Administrative Professionals Week in 2000, but I prefer the tell-it-like-it-is Secretaries Day. The NSA (now, naturally, the International Association of Administrative Professionals) claims the day is meant to enhance the image of administrative workers, promote career development, and encourage people to enter the field. But does it really do any of the above? Not for me.

In my first job out of college, I worked as a typist at a title company, a job akin to cryptography. I pecked my way toward carpal tunnel syndrome to turn chicken scratch into property reports. Typists served the entire office, but title officers also had personal secretaries. On Secretaries Day, we typists sucked our teeth at the bouquets on the secretaries' desks. At my next corporate job, I'd gained an "assistant" title. But along with the other assistants, I was still left empty-handed. The office professionals chipped in for a bouquet for the division secretary, who regularly pawned off duties on us assistants and huffed when asked to, well, work. "I can't believe they got *her* flowers," we hissed.

My mother, a former hospital administrative assistant, was surprised with three greeting cards and a gorgeous scarf last Secretaries Day. She wasn't aware of the holiday and was touched that the nurses in her department took the opportunity to thank her for working hard on special projects. But she also had to listen to a chorus of "I didn't get anything" from other admins. She says that didn't diminish her pleasure, but it does prove my point. When the holiday makes someone feel appreciated, it almost invariably leaves others out in the cold.

Maybe part of the problem is that in the 50 years since the holiday began, the duties of a secretary have been farmed out

across the office, and the job definition is no longer clear. A secretary used to be the woman who answered phones, took dictation, typed, picked up dry cleaning, and stole your husband, if she was really good. Now she (or he) might give PowerPoint presentations or build a Web site. Meanwhile, someone else might do the typing and filing. The confusion over who qualifies as a secretary creates social anxiety about either over-celebrating the holiday or under-celebrating it. One Secretaries Day, a former advertising-sales assistant and co-worker of mine got lovely plants from colleagues who rushed to point out that they'd gotten her a gift even though she wasn't really a secretary. She got the impression they thought she might be offended by being lumped in with the admin staff. The holiday forces workers, like it or not, to evaluate how they stack up. Mail-room guy, copy clerk, typist, receptionist, administrative secretary, executive assistant—are you low enough on the totem pole to merit a gift? Or are you too low?

In some industries, Secretaries Day is less apt to cause confusion. Schools, for example, have it easy—it's obvious that the lady in the front office with her glasses hanging by a chain is the secretary. But in many workplaces, administrative positions are rife with ambiguity. What about legal clerks at law firms and sales assistants at magazines—when you cut them, do they not bleed Wite-Out? In the media business, assistant positions are often a stepping stone to greater glory. Still, assistants perform the same duties as secretaries. And even if most of them don't do it for long, every publication has a guy who's been an editorial assistant for 15 years. He can write a dozen screenplays and freelance hundreds of album reviews for the local indie paper, but he's still going to be an assistant 10 years from now. Does he deserve the same Benihana gift certificate that the publisher's secretary gets? Of course he does. He just lacks the magic title.

Perhaps my impatience with Secretaries Day springs from job dissatisfaction, as an executive assistant at a New York-based magazine suggested when we mused about why the holiday creates bitterness. True—in my mind, I should be the boss. [And I resent](#) being reminded of my slow progress up the chain of command every year.\* Those of us who yearn to be professionals, not administrative professionals, tend to bristle at the idea that we're just boosters for the big boys and girls. (Don't get me started on the perversity of National Boss Day, Oct. 16.)

Some bosses feel compelled to take their secretary, assistant, or whoever out to lunch on Secretaries Day. It's a nice gesture, but who wants to sit through that awkward meal? Anyone who has seen the *Curb Your Enthusiasm* episode in which Larry David takes his maid on a squirm-worthy lunch date at his country club knows the potential disaster of forced boss-employee conviviality. Instead of Secretaries Day, why not just chip in for a big cake on the Friday before Labor Day and toast everyone in the office—wouldn't that be kinder, not to mention easier? I'd much prefer that to a holiday that's a catch-all for "attagirl," "I'm

sorry for being an insufferable employer," and "we should talk about that raise."

**Correction, April 22, 2008:** *The original article implied that Administrative Professionals Day is always celebrated on April 26. It is celebrated on the Wednesday of the last full week in April. ([Return to the corrected sentences.](#))*

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## recycled Queen for a Day

Danica Patrick just won her first race, but is she a great driver?

By Robert Weintraub

Monday, April 21, 2008, at 4:09 PM ET

*Race-car driver Danica Patrick says that she "[can die happy](#)" now that she's won a race on the Indy-car circuit. Patrick's victory at the Indy Japan 300, the first for a woman in the Indy Racing League, was perhaps her best performance since the 2005 Indianapolis 500, where she took fourth place as a rookie. After that race, Robert Weintraub praised Patrick's talent but also noted that the IRL has been watered down in recent years. "If we're searching for an analogy for Patrick's achievement, imagine if [Annika Sorenstam](#) placed fourth in a PGA Tour event after the top golfers broke away to form their own tour," Weintraub wrote. The full article is reprinted below.*

Every hero needs a villain, so the sports media were positively giddy last weekend when Robby Gordon started whining about Danica Patrick's figure. Patrick is the 23-year-old woman who turned in the most famous fourth-place finish in auto-racing history at last weekend's [Indianapolis 500](#). Gordon opined that Patrick's svelte physique—she weighs in at about 100 pounds—gives her an unfair advantage against fleshier drivers.

Gordon's skinny-bashing has little merit. Over 500 grueling miles, the pounds mean far less than talent, focus, and stamina. His misguided disapproval did allow Patrick to skate past a more valid criticism, though. Patrick competes in a racing series that has been watered down to the point of irrelevance. While beating men in such a macho domain is laudable, it should be noted somewhere—OK, here—that her accomplishment represents less of a cultural shift than a reflection of the sad state of affairs at Indy.

Don't be mad at yourself for letting the world's best-known race drift from your consciousness. No one has been interested in the Indy 500 for a decade. The vehicles that greats like Foyt and Andretti raced to glory are called Indy cars. The series they raced in was called CART, and until the mid-1990s it was the dominant domestic motor-sports franchise. But in 1994, Tony

George, the president of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, announced the formation of the [Indy Racing League](#). George wrapped himself in the flag, claiming the move was designed to promote American drivers and sponsors. In reality, it was a blatant power grab.

CART owners responded by boycotting the Indy 500 and running the [swiftly forgotten U.S. 500](#) in its place. While the media waited for one series to establish dominance, fans and sponsors burned rubber toward NASCAR. Ratings bottomed out, attendance declined, and the next generation of talented drivers stopped dreaming of running at Indy—except at NASCAR's [Brickyard 400](#). CART went bankrupt in 2003, but the IRL hasn't capitalized. The circuit used to be dominated by boldface names like Mears, Rahal, Fittipaldi, and Unser. I'll forgive you for not remembering that some guy named [Buddy Rice](#) won Indy last year. And by this time next week, you'll have forgotten all about [Dan Wheldon](#).

If we're searching for an analogy for Patrick's achievement, imagine if [Annika Sorenstam](#) placed fourth in a PGA Tour event after the top golfers broke away to form their own tour. Instead of besting Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson, let's say that Sorenstam knocked off Ty Tryon and Billy Andrade. A milestone in women's sports? Sure. A feat that's slightly tempered by the diluted level of competition? Most definitely.

The weaker field in this year's Indy 500 didn't simply make Danica Patrick's driving easier. It also made it less of a hassle for her to find deep-pocketed sponsors and a savvy racing team. Among the very few skilled enough to drive at the professional level, the difference is support. In the glory days of Indy car racing, it would have been inconceivable for an inexperienced rookie like Patrick to sign on with a top team like [Rahal-Letterman](#). It would be like an elite NASCAR team sending a go-kart driver to Daytona.

If you think Patrick's talent and charisma would have been enough to win her a top ride in any era, just take a look at NASCAR's [Shawna Robinson](#). Like Patrick, Robinson is strikingly beautiful and has loads of talent—she sat on the pole in a Busch Series race (the rung just below NASCAR's major leagues), the only woman ever to do so. But Robinson isn't a star. Since NASCAR is stocked with talent, she's been stuck on a small team with iffy sponsorship support. Racing for a second-tier team led to second-tier results, and Robinson lost her regular ride earlier this season. Had she gone into Indy racing, she'd be a legend by now.

Patrick is so marketable—she's pretty, well-spoken, and American—it's a wonder she wasn't created in a lab. The most important factor in her success, though, is her ability to win quickly in racing's equivalent of AA ball. She'll also have the support of ESPN/ABC. ESPN wants back into NASCAR in the worst way, but Fox will spend whatever it takes to stay in, and

NBC is drooling at the prospect of NASCAR/NFL double-headers on Sundays. So, what is the worldwide leader to do? Pump up the motor-sports alternative. The network has already been sending reporters to IRL races for *SportsCenter* despite a lack of any recognizable viewer interest. Patrick's emergence will likely mean more programming: live qualifying runs, tech shows, reality shows, and *IRL 2-Night* or some such iteration. Be prepared for her mug to be as ubiquitous on ESPN as Stuart Scott's.

Will the increased visibility of Patrick and the IRL mean more female drivers behind the wheel at a speedway near you? Along with Robinson, there are several women in the lower levels of NASCAR, including [Deborah Renshaw](#), [Tina Gordon](#), and Kelly "Girl" Sutton. However, female drivers are still a rarity at sprint-car and dirt tracks across the country, the place where novice drivers earn their stripes by swapping paint on weekend nights. And if the IRL capitalizes and open-wheel racing makes a comeback, Patrick's star power may actually work against the women who idolize her. More money means more drivers and bigger sponsorship expectations. Inexperienced female drivers will probably be the first to feel the squeeze.

It's impossible to know at this point if Patrick—or Shawna Robinson—is the real deal. What is clear is that Liz Johnson's recent achievement was more impressive than Patrick's finish at Indy. In March, Johnson [made the final](#) of a Pro Bowlers Association event, the first time a woman advanced anywhere near that far in a men's tournament. Not only did Johnson finish higher than Patrick, she did so against the top bowlers on tour (the man who defeated Johnson, Tommy Jones, is a leading candidate for PBA Player of the Year). But you didn't see Johnson on [the cover of Sports Illustrated](#).

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## Science

### The Bogus \$1 Million Meat Prize

Why PETA's artificial chicken contest is nothing but a publicity stunt.

By Daniel Engber

Wednesday, April 23, 2008, at 7:12 AM ET

Fake chicken could now be worth \$1 million. In the last few days, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals [announced](#) that it will present a \$1 million prize to anyone who can demonstrate a major breakthrough in the technology of [lab-grown meat](#); Contestants have until 2012 to produce a commercially viable, *in vitro* chicken substitute that tastes just like the real thing.

The X-Poultry Prize has already generated [high expectations](#). In its press release, PETA suggests that *in vitro* farms will spare the



"more than 40 billion chickens, fish, pigs, and cows" that are killed every year in the United States. My colleague William Saletan promised *Slate* readers that "animals were only the first incarnation of meat. [Get ready for the second.](#)" I'm not so bullish. We might be eating test-tube McNuggets at some point in the next 10 or 20 years, but it's hard to see how PETA's \$1 million will help to get us there.

To understand why, let's back up and think about what [a science prize is supposed to do](#). In theory, a cash incentive encourages private companies to pursue research that doesn't have a clear financial reward. For example, a pharmaceutical company might not have much reason to invest in treating a disease of the developing world, like malaria. A patent on a malaria vaccine would be a great boon for global health, but it wouldn't be worth that much money since the people who need it most can't afford to pay.

Science prizes can also encourage intermediate breakthroughs that don't have an immediate commercial application. The Orteig Prize offered \$25,000 to anyone who could fly nonstop from New York to Paris. The commercial aviation industry would eventually be worth hundreds of billions of dollars, but when Charles Lindbergh made the trip in 1927, the prize itself was the payoff.

So what's wrong with the PETA prize? You need to sell your product in order to win. According to the [contest guidelines](#) (PDF), the million-dollar meat must be available in stores to qualify for the cash. Fake-chicken entrepreneurs have to demonstrate a "commercial sales minimum" at a "comparable market price"; in plain English, they need to move 2,000 pounds of the stuff at supermarkets and chain restaurants spread out across 10 states during a period of three months. And the Franken-meat can't cost more than regular chicken.

That means PETA won't be content with any intermediate (and not immediately profitable) breakthrough, like the development of lab-grown chicken that tastes as good as the natural stuff. Instead, the organization will hold the purse until a "commercially viable" product hits the market. In other words, you can't win the \$1 million unless you're already in position to make a profit. At that point, a science prize doesn't provide much incentive for innovation. It's more like a small bonus.

To make matters worse, PETA's commercial requirements saddle researchers with demands that have nothing to do with science. Any company that wants to sell artificial chicken for public consumption will probably face a lengthy government-review process. Consider that it took [five years](#) for the Food and Drug Administration to approve the sale of cloned meat. Let's say you invented a perfect chicken substitute tomorrow—something so delicious and inexpensive that it could go into production right away. Even then, you still might not make the PETA deadline for supermarket sales.

By comparison, the contests sponsored by the X Prize Foundation have no such requirements. To win the [Google Lunar X Prize](#), a team of engineers must put a robot on the moon. They don't need to put it on sale in the [Hammacher Schlemmer](#) catalog. The Progressive Automotive X Prize, [announced last month](#), will go to the developers of a car that gets more than 100 miles per gallon. They must also demonstrate that their car is "production capable"—i.e., that it won't cost much more than \$75,000 to make one—and they need to "articulate clear and viable business cases for bringing their vehicles to market." But they don't have to start selling them at the local dealership.

The PETA prize may turn out to be a minor boon for lab-meat research, insofar as it generates publicity for the project. (When everyone starts talking about artificial chicken, private investors will take notice.) But it's hard to imagine that the \$1 million will itself provide much incentive. As a science prize, it just feels a little fake.

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slate v

## The Stupidest Bike Lane, Part 2

A daily video from *Slate V*.

Thursday, April 24, 2008, at 5:44 PM ET

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slate v

## Bush Retirement Plans

A daily video from *Slate V*.

Tuesday, April 22, 2008, at 2:10 PM ET

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slate v

## Dear Prudence: Way Too Much Information

A daily video from *Slate V*.

Monday, April 21, 2008, at 12:53 PM ET

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television

## Dead Air

Why CBS should shutter its news division.

By Troy Patterson

Wednesday, April 23, 2008, at 4:58 PM ET

To judge by the ads, the most loyal adherents to CBS' quasi-



journalistic programming are impotent and incontinent. It so happens that they share these afflictions with the network's actual news division. Katie Couric is reportedly itching to bolt her gig as the anchor of broadcast TV's worst-rated evening newscast. Last month, Shelley Ross lost her job producing *The Early Show*, the worst-rated morning newscast, after problems concerning temper tantrums and tequila parties. Most weeks, the perfectly decent Bob Schieffer, who will retire after the 2009 inauguration, sees *Face the Nation* to a finish as the third-rated Sunday show. And the only thing worse than the Nielsen numbers is the product.

Poor Katie, a victim of the poor health of her medium and of simple chauvinism, of unreasonably high expectations and of a stupidly high salary. For \$15 million a year, you'd think she could at least pretend to be having fun up there, but—last Friday, at least—all her cheer was forced, and all her charm was canned. Going through the motions, she went through the news of the day—polygamists in Texas, pope in Gotham, some perfunctory stuff from the campaign trail, a dollop of business news. Somewhere in there was a bit on the Pennsylvania primary featuring a snippet from Billy Joel's "Allentown."

The night's big enterprise piece was a report—thin with substance, thick with outrage—on congressional earmark spending on an aquarium in Chicago. "A taxpayer watchdog group thinks something *fishy* is going on there," said Couric. Poor Katie. The aquarium "sits on millions of dollars in net assets," said whichever reporter it was. Hmm. I'm no not-for-profit expert, but isn't that called an endowment? The human-interest story was about a child who'd reached the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro, and Couric kept teasing it in the oddest way: *Boy versus mountain. Who wins? Stay tuned.* This is rather like saying, *Man versus dog. Who bites whom? Film at 11.* Poor Katie.

I suppose that we'll have to talk about *The Early Show*, a program entirely lacking in tonal coherence. Co-anchor Maggie Rodriguez looked awfully lonely by herself in the studio on Monday, and she led with either the polygamist story or more pope pap; who can remember? Her partner, Harry Smith, was in Pennsylvania. "Coming up," he said, "we're going to explain why Pennsylvania is such an amazing state." This was about 7:30 a.m. The commercial break included a promo for *CSI: Miami* that featured one close-up of a corpse and, for variety, one medium shot of a corpse. When we came back, it turned out that what's great about Pennsylvania are such things as Utz pretzels, Heinz ketchup, Rolling Rock beer, Pittsburgh's Andrew Warhola. There were visual aids, in case you couldn't quite put your finger on what a ketchup bottle looks like. Smith: "It's a pretty cool state, I should say." I have two nephews in elementary school in Philadelphia, and I think their parents would be troubled if ketchup and beer were the best that they could come up with for an oral report on this topic.

*The Early Show* gave us some more polygamy coverage; then, at 8:02 a.m., ran a promo for *Moonlight* in which the camera lavished Bruce Weber-style attention on its hero's bare torso; then went back to Pennsylvania to play a sample of Billy Joel's "Allentown." At 8:55 a.m., *Today* aired a live performance by Alicia Keys, and *Good Morning America* hosted the country act Ashton Shepherd. *The Early Show*, eager to get in on the musical fun, ran a montage of pope moments set to tinkling sap.

A brief word about *CBS Sunday Morning*: While it is obvious that this network's coverage and presentation of current events is geared toward old people, the target audience of Charles Osgood's show seems to be already dead—peacefully so. There was, last time around, some tranquil nature footage. Also, a profile of crooner Michael Bublé that refused to stint on clichés. ("The other thing Bublé won't change, he says, is being himself, outspoken and open.") Ben Stein, the actor and economist, came on to do a commentary on the mortgage crisis in which he argued that federal funds should be devoted to aiding the dogs and cats disadvantaged by the fallout. Either this was exquisitely subtle satire, or everyone involved with the segment has lost his mind.

We're supposed to have some respect for *60 Minutes*, and I'm not entirely sure why that is. The most recent episode began with a Lara Logan piece on a Special Forces unit in Afghanistan. It was teased as a tale of valor that would also expose why we are losing in Afghanistan. In reality, it only addressed one of these topics. Guess which! Recounting a battle between the Green Berets and the Taliban, Logan—whose hair was mussed, which I take to be a considered choice—gave us a boys' adventure story of the old school. It takes nothing away from the courage and sacrifice of these soldiers to say that the segment was an encyclopedia of war-story treacle: "I thought, 'If I'm going down, I'm taking them with me,' " and so on.

Next, Leslie Stahl did a number on the side effects of gastric bypass surgery. Some studies suggest that it has substantial benefits for diabetes patients. On the down side, it may make you more likely to kill yourself. Why were we talking about this? Next, the dapper veteran Morley Safer reported on a lost mural of da Vinci's. This segment was fine, despite mostly delivering the impression that it was a shrewd way for Safer to take a trip to Florence, where I do hope he had some shoes made. In our few minutes with Andy Rooney—now in his 30<sup>th</sup> year on the show and in his 29<sup>th</sup> as a cranky old punch line—Andy inveighed passionately against the airline industry. "I like to get up and walk around when I fly, but they don't make the aisles as wide as they used to. ..." He proposed we should boycott the airline industry for a week.

Taking a cue, I propose that it is time for CBS News to be put down, in the Old Yeller sense of the phrase. It's time to turn out the lights and just start airing Hollywood gossip at 6:30 p.m. The network could follow Schieffer's lead and simply dissolve the

thing after the inauguration, maybe keeping *60 Minutes* around, either as a commercial-free public service program (because what exec doesn't love a prestige-hogging loss leader?) or under the auspices of CBS' entertainment division (because why keep pretending?). The farewell would be handled with dignified pomp—tributes to Murrow and Severeid and so forth. And if Walter Cronkite is in good health, he could do the honors with a final sign off. I'm serious. That's how bad things are, and that's the way it is.

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## television

### ***Friday Night Lights***

Why aren't you watching the best show on television?

By Sara Mosle

Tuesday, April 22, 2008, at 1:11 PM ET

The second season of NBC's *Friday Night Lights* is available on DVD starting today. If you have yet to tune in—and to judge from the Nielsen ratings, this describes most Americans—it's time to get with the program. The show, which is ostensibly about high-school football in the fictional West Texas town of Dillon, has something for everyone: enough testosterone-fueled football and violence to grow chest hairs by watching it, some of the most vivid and complex female characters on television, and sex and booze to pique any teenager's interest. Despite this mature content, the series is also a profoundly moving and edifying "family drama" as the genre has never before been conceived. If none of this interests you, maybe you don't actually like television.

*Friday Night Lights* is also Texas as it's seldom been seen—which is to say, as it really is. Virtually no one in Dillon wears a cowboy hat, and certainly no one under 30 does. The show has yet to show a single character on a horse. The only person depicted as remotely connected to an oil well is a businessman from Los Angeles, briefly passing through, representing faraway interests. That's not to say there aren't some distinctly Texan characters. Buddy Garrity, the corrupt, meddling car salesman who lives and dies by Dillon football, is a genuine archetype (marvelously played by Brad Leland). Still, *Walker, Texas Ranger* this ain't. It's more like *The Last Picture Show*, 60 years after the cinema closed, without the sexual repression and filmed in sensuous color.

*Friday Night Lights* is also America as it's seldom been seen. It's astounding how few dramas depict ordinary, working-class life in the so-called red states—without, say, first giving several of the inhabitants supernatural powers. Also, on television, the country's lower classes seem to consist entirely of prison inmates, gang members, drug dealers, and the cops who arrest them, and they all live exclusively on the coasts. Dillon, by

contrast, is Thomas Frank country. No one here is enjoying the Bush-Cheney tax cuts. People live in modest homes or, if they're particularly poor, in shotgun shacks. Most of the teenagers don't have cars—quite a statement in rural Texas—and must work after-school jobs. They don't have iPods or sport the latest fashions; they shop at the Salvation Army family store. When one football player lands a date with the coach's daughter and springs for a used Members Only jacket, it quickly gets ridiculed as pretentious. Once you start noticing the absence of consumer goods, it's a shock. *Friday Night Lights* may be the most radical show ever marketed to teenagers.

But unlike most high-school dramas, the series gets the parents right, too. This may be the first family drama that the entire family can watch and have each member still feel as if it's written solely for him or her. At the heart of the show are Eric Taylor (Kyle Chandler), the football coach, and his wife, Tami (Connie Britton), a guidance counselor at the school, who together represent a balance between traditional and more therapeutic outlooks on empathy and authority. As relatively recent arrivals in Dillon, the Taylors are something of an anomaly: They're a happily married couple and economically secure (at least as long as the Panthers are winning). They also have a high-achieving daughter, Julie (whom they are struggling to let grow up), and, as of the second season, a newborn, who brings new strains.

In our privatized culture, we are used to seeing families, both in life and on television, in isolation, caught up in their own hyper-privilege or their own hell. Privacy, however, is a luxury of the relatively well-to-do, and while the Taylors could probably afford it, they choose, in a way that is sadly rare, to immerse themselves fully in their adopted town. For others in Dillon, boundaries are necessarily more porous. It's hard to find privacy when you're living in your car or on someone's sofa. Many parents are AWOL—lost in their own love lives or addictions or so immature as to be the child in any relationship. Repeatedly, sons and daughters on the show plead with their parents to act more like adults.

Consequently, the normal pattern of adolescent rebellion is reversed. Teenagers aren't in flight from adult connection, they're desperate for it. In one scene, Julie comes home from her boyfriend's house, where she's witnessed a scene of family chaos, and announces to her Mom and Dad: "I love you. ... You guys are the best parents in the world." Eric gives his wife a smug, clueless look, as in "Aren't we great?" But Tami's face is a mask of horror: "No, honey!" she says. "Something terrible must have happened!" The dialogue in *Friday Night Lights* is often slyly hilarious. However, the show never calls attention to its humor or inside knowledge of sports or family life. It trusts you to understand, as you would understand any ordinary conversation, even if you don't know what a "counter" or "skinny post" is in football or what "pump and dump" and "six week story" mean in breast-feeding or postnatal sex.

However, as central as the Taylors are to Dillon and to the storytelling, what makes *Friday Night Lights* unique is how every one of the show's teenagers (not just Julie) are presented within the context of their extended families. These parents and siblings, even a grandmother struggling with the onset of Alzheimer's, are themselves major or recurring characters. When parents are missing (whether because they're dead, deadbeat, or deployed to Iraq), their absences are palpable, aching presences on the show. More peripheral figures come and go, commanding our attention for a few episodes before disappearing again, the way acquaintances and business associates do in real life. Virtually every age, racial background, and economic subgroup (besides that minuscule percentage of Americans who are decidedly wealthy) are portrayed in depth. The ensemble cast is consequently enormous—and to a one, extraordinary. Television has previously given us a single family, a school, friends, sisters and brothers, the bar, the corner, law firms, a lane, a ZIP code, even rich men, poor men. But never has television provided such an all-encompassing and realistic portrait of an entire town.

In service to this vision, there is no one setting for the show. Hand-held cameras follow actors around on location, as they go about what appears to be their actual lives—to the gas station, to the grocery store, to the local diner, into one another's homes. The cameras even ride in the car, like passengers, staring out at the passing scenery. When an event occurs—whether the star quarterback's spinal injury in the pilot episode, the unintended killing of a man that begins the second season, or just an affair or lie—we see how it affects not just one or two families or individuals but how it reverberates throughout the town and links people who may have previously had little or no interaction, socially or economically, but who are nonetheless connected.

Almost as if to counter this wide narrative scope, an enormous percentage of the show's scenes are shot in extreme close-ups. The camera shifts attention the way our eyes do: to a speaker's face, a tapping foot, a picture on the living-room wall, back to the speaker, in an aggregation of telling details. We're not onlookers to a scene. We're in the scene, inches from another person's face. Dialogue, though sometimes improvised, is likewise edited and compressed to its comic or serious essence. Sometimes there are no words at all: just an eye roll, a shrug, a dumbfounded silence.

Perhaps because *Friday Night Lights* presents women in so many different circumstances, juggling so many balls, the series has sharply-defined female characters. Principal among them is Tami. In the first season, the show established her credibility as a wife and mother. But at the start of the second season, her life begins to unravel. She has a new baby, a sexually rebellious daughter, and a husband who's taken a job in another town. No show has more accurately or honestly portrayed the disarray and utter exhaustion of new motherhood. Given their incomes, the Taylors can scarcely afford child care, prompting Tami to

consider giving up her job. Tami's single younger sister moves in for a while to help, setting up an exploration of their conflicting lifestyles. Eventually, there's an opening in a neighborhood day-care center. At first, Tami can't separate from her infant daughter. Where another show might have lost its nerve (having the mother stay home), Tami eventually makes the handoff successfully, without further ado.

Because this is rural Texas, church life is integral to the town and also starkly segregated. As in many communities, churches serve social, not just religious, functions. The billboard outside one chapel reads, "We baby-sit for away games." Not everyone in Dillon is "born again"—or even believes. Faith is complex and runs the gamut. One evangelical single mother works at Planned Parenthood. The town mayor is a fiercely intelligent middle-aged woman and a semi-closeted lesbian. For Buddy, the Panther booster and car salesman, faith amounts to praying alone in a chapel, after an all-important game: "I know you truly are an all-powerful God to let such a crap team win." Jason, the quarterback who is paralyzed, scorns God after his accident. Lyla, his former girlfriend, goes the opposite direction and joins a megachurch. When she tries to hand a flyer about "Christ Teen Messengers" to Tim Riggins, a wayward soul and the town heartthrob with whom she once slept, he gleefully informs her, "I had a three-way with the Stratton sisters." Tim is the Christopher Hitchens of Dillon.

Despite such sexually explicit content, the show's characters—even Tim—are forever asking themselves and one another whether they're "good Christians." Sometimes the inquiry is mocking; other times deadly earnest. Yet the questions don't rankle even nonbelievers because the show is so clearly not pushing any message or creed. Rather, such inquiries are Dillon's vernacular for more basic questions, which everyone (including adults) must answer if they are ever to grow up: What does it mean to be a good person? Who is a person of honor? What are my obligations to myself and to other people? The show's themes are "mature"—but in both senses of the word. Tyra, Tim's sometimes-girlfriend, may not have an ounce of religious feeling, but that doesn't mean she doesn't have a moral code. "Don't you dare screw my sister," she tells Tim. "That's my line—don't cross it."

The football on *Friday Night Lights* is also genuinely thrilling although the outcomes are often improbable. Every game is a cliffhanger. The show's real concerns are elsewhere. On the wall of the Panther locker room, a small sign reads: "character is who you are when no one is watching." It's a motto born of necessity in Dillon. The eyes of Texas aren't upon this dying oil town. But in an age of MySpace, YouTube, and *American Idol*, it's a refreshing notion, this idea that what we do when no one else is looking matters. In this sense, *Friday Night Lights* may be the farthest one can get from reality TV—and the closest to real life. We don't have to be stranded on a desert island or dared to eat

bugs to discover what we're made of. Most of us can find that out in our living rooms.

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## the dismal science

### The Pilgrim's Progressiveness

Does going to Mecca make Muslims more moderate?

By Ray Fisman

Friday, April 25, 2008, at 7:05 AM ET

Last December, more than 2 million Muslims from around the world converged on Saudi Arabia to participate in the Hajj, the annual pilgrimage to the holy site of Mecca. The Hajjis spent a month performing religious rituals, mingling with Muslims from all walks of life, and, in some cases, taking part in communal chants of "[Death to America](#)" led by Islamic extremists. This was understandably [unnerving](#) to the 10,000 or so Americans who made the pilgrimage, not to mention those who didn't. Such behavior raised concerns that the Hajj is a breeding ground for anti-Western sentiment—[or worse](#).

Then again, the spirit of friendship and community that typically prevails during the Hajj has also been known to promote tolerance and understanding across peoples. Malcolm X famously softened his views on black-white relations during his pilgrimage to Mecca, where he witnessed a "spirit of unity and brotherhood that my experiences in America had led me to believe never could exist between the white and non-white."

So does the Hajj open minds, or does it expose Muslims to radical views that unite them against the non-Islamic world? To find out, researchers [David Clingingsmith](#), [Asim Khwaja](#), and [Michael Kremer](#) surveyed more than 1,600 Pakistanis, about half of whom went on the Hajj in 2006. In a recent, as yet unpublished [study](#), they report that those who went to Mecca came back with more moderate views on a range of issues, both religious and nonreligious, suggesting that the Hajj may be helpful in curbing the spread of extremism in the Islamic world.

All Muslims are expected to make the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their lives, though many have to overcome significant obstacles to do so. The Hajj is a huge expense for a typical Pakistani. The cost of making the trip starts at \$2,500, nearly three times Pakistan's average income. Poor families save for years in order to attend. And what does \$2,500 buy you? A once-in-a-lifetime religious experience, but one that involves a month of sleeping on a hard mattress in an overcrowded hostel and travel that often requires trekking dozens of miles through the desert to visit various pilgrimage sites.

Despite these hardships, there are many more Pakistanis who wish to go to Mecca each year than there are Saudi visas. In

2006, nearly 140,000 applicants vied for 80,000 visas through the Pakistan government's Hajj program. In order to decide who gets to go, the government holds a lottery. As a result, among the visa applicants, there's a group of people randomly selected to participate in the Hajj and a comparison group of would-be pilgrims who applied but didn't get to go. The two groups look very similar—the only systematic difference is that applicants in one group won the lottery and those in the other group didn't. If the Hajjis come back from Mecca more tolerant than those who didn't get to go, therefore, we know it's the result of the Hajj, not something else.

Six months after the Hajjis of '06 returned home to Pakistan, Clingingsmith, Khwaja, and Kremer had a survey team track down 1,600 Hajj applicants, half of whom had been selected to go to Mecca and half who hadn't. The Hajjis were asked questions on topics ranging from religious practices (frequency of prayer and mosque attendance, for example) to women's issues. Perhaps not surprisingly, the study found that after a monthlong immersion in communal prayer, the pilgrims were 15 percent more likely to report following mainstream Muslim practices, such as praying five times a day and reciting the Quran. This came at the expense of local Pakistani religious traditions—Hajjis were 10 percent less likely to follow local rituals like using amulets or visiting the tombs of local saints.

But the changes from the Hajj experience transcended mere shifts in religious observance, inspiring many pilgrims with newfound feelings of tolerance. While in Mecca, Hajjis can't help but rub shoulders with Muslims of every shape and size. Sunni and Shiite, African and Pakistani, all live and pray together as a single congregation of millions. This intermixing of peoples in Mecca seems to have caused the Pakistani Hajjis to express more tolerant views of other Muslims. Just over half of the Pakistanis who didn't go on the Hajj told the survey team that they had a positive view of other Muslim countries. This figure jumped to nearly 70 percent among Hajj survey respondents.

Even more surprising, Hajjis were 25 percent *less* likely to believe that it was impossible for Muslims of different ethnicities or sects to live together in harmony—a finding that would seem to be of particular interest for those trying to bring peace to the streets of Baghdad. This greater sense of goodwill among peoples even extended to non-Muslims (who were obviously not represented in Mecca). Hajjis were more likely than non-Hajjis to hold the opinion that people of all religions can live in harmony. Hajjis were also less likely to feel that extreme methods—such as suicide bombings or attacks on civilians—could be justified in dealing with disagreements between Muslims and non-Muslims.

The findings of the study suggest that the Hajj may help to improve the lot of women in Islamic countries as well. Fewer Hajjis thought that men are intellectually superior to women, and a greater fraction expressed a concern for crimes against women

in Pakistan. Why should a prayer trip to Mecca raise consciousness about women's issues? Perhaps because in Mecca, men and women pray together. By contrast, women in Pakistan rarely attend religious services, and when they do, they're relegated to a separate part of the mosque from the men. Familiarity seems to breed tolerance and respect.

And what about views of the United States? Does the Hajj have pilgrims chanting "Death to America" by the time they board the plane to go back home? Despite anti-American rallies and the presence in Mecca of religious fanatics, Hajjis don't return with views of the West that are any more negative than those who stayed home. They were no more likely to believe that Jews or Westerners were involved in the Sept. 11 attacks and were no more hostile to Western values or innovations than non-Hajjis.

Pilgrims may not return from the Hajj harboring warm feelings for America, but it's heartening to find that the Hajj may help to undermine support for the violent methods that have been so devastatingly deployed against Americans in the past. And if we're to bring an end to violence in Iraq and elsewhere in the Muslim world, it is imperative that Iraqis and others believe that they can peacefully settle differences among themselves. According to this study, the Hajj may help to achieve both of these objectives. Rather than worrying about the hate-mongering extremists that seem to exist on the fringes of the Hajj, perhaps the United States should consider redirecting some of its aid to Pakistan (and perhaps Iraq and Iran) to help more pilgrims make the trip.

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## the green lantern

### Is a Dishwasher a Green Machine?

The soapy sponge may not be worth your time.

By Brendan I. Koerner

Tuesday, April 22, 2008, at 7:56 AM ET

**I've always taken great eco-pride in the fact that I hand-wash all my plates and glasses, thereby eliminating the need for an electricity-slurping dishwasher. But my sister says that I've got it all wrong—using a machine, she insists, is more environmentally sound than doing the chore yourself. Have my good intentions been for naught?**

To properly answer this question, the Lantern would have to spend a few nights in your kitchen, armed with a stopwatch and various measuring implements. That's because much depends on your specific hand-washing technique. Do you fill the basin, or do you let the faucet run? Do you scrape off crusty particles or hope that the jet of water does the trick? Are you cool with dishes piling up over the course of the day, or are you a stickler

for washing them right away? If you adhere to the most efficient hand-washing regimen imaginable, you can probably beat a machine. But your margin of victory may be disappointingly slight, and hardly enough to justify all the extra time.

Your intuitive preference for hand-washing may harken back to your childhood, when dishwashers were gluttons for energy and water. But much has changed in recent years—between 1993 and 2003, for example, the average machine became 27 percent more energy efficient and 30 percent more water efficient. Today's most advanced machines use just a single kilowatt hour of electricity per load, and as little as 3.18 gallons of water. (Similarly impressive improvements in washing-machine efficiency have altered the [environmental debate over diapers](#).)

These efficiency improvements were highlighted in a [much-discussed study](#) (PDF) from the University of Bonn, published four years ago. More than 100 Europeans were observed cleaning a dozen full place-settings by hand. The German researchers found that the average hand-washer is quite the wastrel, using 27.2 gallons of water, which requires 2.5 kWh of electricity to heat. (The most careless hand-washers were Spanish and Portuguese, while the most economical were German.) An ultra-efficient machine, by contrast, used only between 3.96 and 5.81 gallons of water, and between 1 and 2 kWh of electricity.

Advantage, technology. But if you read the German study carefully, you'll see that the best hand-washers came close to matching the machine's performance. These paragons of efficiency employed a few key tricks, among them using two-basin sinks and filling one basin with hot, soapy water and the other with cold water for rinsing. They also scraped off crusty food particles, rather than wash them away with running water. Such clever hand-washers were able to keep their daily water usage below eight gallons, well within spitting distance of the machine. And their electricity usage was just 1 kWh per day.

Those skilled hand-washers look even better when you consider the environmental costs of manufacturing, transporting, and (eventually) disposing of a machine, none of which were factored into the German study. Nor did the researchers consider the fact that dishwashing detergents often contain phosphates, which can cause ecologically harmful [algal blooms](#) in waterways. And gas-powered water heaters, which are common in the United States, are more efficient than the electrical heaters considered by the Germans.

It's also worth noting that not all dishwasher owners use their machines in the most efficient manner possible. To really green up your automatic dishwashing, you should always use the air-drying function, avoid the profligate "rinse hold" setting, wash only full loads, and install the machine far away from your refrigerator. (The dishwasher's heat will force your fridge to work harder and thus negate your supposed energy savings.)



Despite all of these complicating factors, the German researchers have stood by their conclusions, most recently in a [2007 follow-up](#) (PDF) to their initial report. And their pro-machines sentiment is seconded in a widely circulated [pamphlet](#) (PDF), which estimates that using an EnergyStar dishwasher will save you \$35 per year on water and energy costs.

But the Lantern is skeptical of that assertion, since it relies on the University of Bonn data for hand-washing, and on manufacturer-supplied estimates of machine performance. The authors of a [British study](#) (PDF) funded by the United Kingdom's sustainable products agency comes to a more measured conclusion: "Claims that dishwashers are more energy efficient than hand washing are sometimes made and have no foundation."

That sounds about right to the Lantern, especially if you factor in a life-cycle analysis of a steel dishwasher manufactured in China (which typically last between nine and 11 years). If you're truly dedicated to hand-washing the right way, you'll usually come out ahead of the average machine.

But do you have that level of dedication? At the end of the day, there won't be much of an environmental difference between an ultra-efficient hand-washer and an ultra-efficient machine, as long as the machine is used wisely. The difference in time consumption, however, can be enormous—a fact that the Lantern, whose Lilliputian apartment lacks a dishwasher, knows all too well. And when you're working long hours and taking care of a family, time is often the most precious commodity.

So if you're content to spend dozens of minutes per day on hand-washing, making sure to follow the environmentally correct protocol each and every time, more power to you. But if you'd rather spend that time on something more rewarding yet don't want to suffer pangs of enviro-guilt, you can switch to an EnergyStar machine with the Lantern's blessing. Just promise that you'll scrape your dishes instead of pre-rinsing, use the shortest wash cycles possible, and buy phosphate-free detergents—or, if you're handy with a blender, [make your own](#).

Is there an environmental quandary that's been keeping you up at night? Send it to [ask.the.lantern@gmail.com](mailto:ask.the.lantern@gmail.com), and check this space every Tuesday.

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the has-been

## The Other Dream Ticket

The Democratic case for why McCain should pick Romney.

By Bruce Reed

Monday, April 21, 2008, at 2:14 PM ET

**Monday, April 21, 2008**

**Running With the Big Dogs:** While Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama deflected Charlie Gibson's question about running together, last week was a big one for Democrats' *other* dream ticket: any Republican pairing that includes Mitt Romney. With a well-received cameo at a national press dinner and nods from Great Mentioners like [George H.W. Bush](#) and [Karl Rove](#), Mitt is back—and campaigning hard for the No. 2 slot.

When John McCain wrapped up the Republican nomination back in February, the odds against picking Romney looked long indeed. The two spent the entire primary season at each others' throats. Romney trashed McCain over "amnesty" for illegal immigrants; McCain joked that Romney's many flip-flops proved he really was "[the candidate of change](#)." Even Rudy Giuliani, not known for making peace, chimed in from Florida that McCain and Romney were "[getting kind of nasty](#)," implying that they needed to come chill with him at the beach.

Sure enough, after a little time off, Romney felt better—good enough to begin his vice-presidential audition. He went on Fox to say, "[There really are no hard feelings](#)." He interrupted his vacation in Utah to [host a fundraiser for McCain](#). After months of dismissing McCain as a Washington insider, Romney [flip-flopped](#) and praised him as a longtime congressional champion of Reaganism. Lest anyone fail to notice, Romney confessed that he would be honored to be McCain's running mate, and practiced ripping into the potential Democratic nominees: "When it comes to national security, [John McCain is the big dog, and they are the Chihuahuas](#)."

Of course, [any big dog should think twice before agreeing to a long journey with Mitt Romney](#). The past would not be easy for McCain, Romney, and their staffs and families to overcome. Before New Hampshire, McCain's alter ego, Mark Salter, called Romney "a small-varmint gun totin,' civil rights marching, NRA-endorsed fantasy candidate." After the primaries were over, Josh Romney suggested that the Five Brothers wouldn't be gassing up the Mittmobile for McCain anytime soon: "It's one thing to campaign for my dad, someone whose principles I line up with almost entirely," he told the [Deseret](#)

[News](#). "I can't say the same thing for Sen. McCain."

For Mitt Romney, that won't be a problem: Any grudge would vanish the instant McCain named him as his running mate. And by the Republican convention in September, Romney's principles will be due for their six-month realignment.

The more difficult question is, What's in it for McCain? Actually, Romney brings more to the ticket than you might think. As in any partnership, the key to happiness between running mates is a healthy division of labor. When Bill Clinton and Al Gore teamed up in 1992, Clinton had spent most of his career on the economy, education, health care, and other domestic issues; Gore was an expert on national security, the environment, and technology. Even the Bush-Cheney pairing made some sense: Bush cared only about squandering the surplus, privatizing Social Security, and running the economy into the ground; Cheney was more interested in hoarding executive power, helping narrow interests, and tarnishing America's image in the world.

So, McCain and Romney are off to a good start: They come from different backgrounds and share no common interests. McCain, a soldier turned senator, prefers national security above all else. As a former businessman and governor, Romney rarely brings up foreign policy—for reasons that sometimes become apparent when he does so. In his concession speech, Romney said he was dropping out to give McCain a united front against Obama, Clinton, and Bin Laden. "In this time of war, I simply cannot let my campaign be a part of aiding a surrender to terror," he said. "We cannot allow the next president of the United States to [retreat in the face of evil extremism!!](#)"

For the general election, the McCain campaign must decide what to do with conservative positions it took to win the Republican primaries. Here again, Romney is a godsend: a vice-presidential candidate who'll flip-flop so the nominee doesn't have to. No one can match Romney's experience at changing positions: He has been on both sides of abortion, talked out of both sides of his mouth on same-sex marriage, and been for and against his own health care plan. It's a market-based approach to principle—just the glue Republicans need to

expand their coalition. Moderates might assume Romney was only pretending to be conservative, and conservatives will thank him for trying.

Straight talk is all well and good for presidential candidates. But as Dick Cheney demonstrated, the job of a Republican vice-presidential candidate is quite the opposite—keeping a straight face while saying things that couldn't possibly be true. Take the economy, for example. McCain gets visibly uncomfortable whenever he ventures beyond fiscal conservatism. Romney is more flexible. In an interview with [National Journal](#) last week, he had no trouble contending that corporate tax cuts help the middle class. He spent the primaries warning that the United States was on a slippery slope to becoming the next France. Now he's perfectly happy to argue that we have to cut corporate taxes to keep companies from moving to France.

In his [surprise appearance](#) at the Radio & Television Correspondents dinner in Washington last week, Romney showed another virtue that makes him perfect for the role—a vice-presidential temperament. With his "[Top 10 Reasons for Dropping Out](#)," he proved that he is ready to poke fun at himself on Day 1.

A vice president needs to be good at self-deprecation, yet not so skilled that he outshines the boss. By that standard, Romney's audition was perfect: He chose good material ("There weren't as many Osmonds as I had thought"; "As a lifelong hunter, I didn't want to miss the start of varmint season") and [delivered it just awkwardly enough](#) to leave the audience wondering whether to laugh or feel slightly uncomfortable.

After watching him up close in the primaries, Team McCain no doubt harbors real reservations about Romney. Some conservatives distrust him so much, they're running full-page ads that say, "[NO Mitt](#)." A Google search of *John McCain*, *Mitt Romney*, and [food taster](#) produces more than 100 entries.

But looking ahead to a tense fall campaign, McCain should put those concerns aside and listen to voices from across the spectrum. This could be the issue that unites the country across party lines. Democrats like a little fun at Mitt Romney's expense. The McCain camp does, too—perhaps

more so. And after last week, we know that—ever the good sport—even Romney's all for it. ... **2:14 p.m.** ([link](#))

**Thursday, April 10, 2008**

**Twist and Shout:** When the news broke last August that Larry Craig had been arrested in a restroom sex sting, he had a ready answer: The *Idaho Statesman* made him do it. He claimed that the *Statesman's* monthslong investigation into whether he was gay made him panic and plead guilty. Otherwise, he said, he feared that what happened in Minneapolis might not stay in Minneapolis, and the *Statesman* would make sure the voters of Idaho found out.

Craig's jihad against the *Statesman* didn't go over too well in Idaho, where people are more likely to read the newspaper in the restroom than worry about it afterward. On Monday, the *Statesman* was named a runner-up for the Pulitzer Prize in Breaking News Reporting for what the committee called "[its tenacious coverage of the twists and turns in the scandal involving the state's senator, Larry Craig.](#)"

The story took yet another strange twist and turn this week. For the past six months, the entire political world has been wondering why Craig promised to resign when the scandal broke, then changed his mind a few days later. In a rare interview Wednesday with the congressional newspaper the *Hill*, Craig finally found someone to blame for staying in the Senate: The people of Idaho made him do it.

According to the *Hill*, Craig said "[support from Idahoans convinced him to reverse his pledge to resign last year.](#)" This was news to most Idaho voters, who have viewed the whole affair with shock, outrage, embarrassment, and dismay. But Craig didn't stop there. *The Hill* reports that he also said his decision not to run for re-election "pre-dated the controversy."

Last fall, Craig stunned Idahoans by insisting he was not gay, not guilty, and not leaving. Now he says it's our fault he never left, he was leaving anyway, and if he's not running, it's not because we don't believe him when he says he's not guilty and not gay.

Unfortunately, Craig's latest explanation casts some doubt on the excuse he gave last fall. If he had already decided long ago that he wasn't running for re-election, he had less reason to panic over his arrest, and much less to fear from voters finding out about it back home. In September, he made it sound as if he pled guilty to a crime he didn't commit to avoid a political firestorm back home. If politics were of no concern, he had every reason to fight the charges in court. For that matter, if he was so sure he wouldn't run again, he could have announced his decision early last year, which might have staved off the *Statesman* investigation before it got started.

Craig's latest revelation undermines his defense in another way as well. If he is telling the truth that he had made up his mind not to run before his arrest, that would be the best explanation yet for why he risked putting himself in a position to get arrested. Eliot Spitzer's re-election prospects plunged long before he got caught, too.

Nothing can fully explain why public figures like Craig and Spitzer would flagrantly risk arrest. But we can rule out political suicide if they'd already decided their political careers were over. ... **3:55 p.m.** ([link](#))

**Wednesday, April 2, 2008**

**B.Looper:** Learned reader Kyle Sammin recalls that Idaho's Marvin "Pro-Life" Richardson has nothing on 1998 Tennessee State Senate candidate [Byron "Low-Tax" Looper](#). Besides changing his name, Looper also murdered his opponent. Under Tennessee law, the names of dead candidates are removed from the ballot. So even though he was quickly charged with homicide, Looper nearly ran unopposed. The victim's widow won a last-minute write-in campaign. Looper was sentenced to life in prison.

**Bloopers:** The Pittsburgh Pirates are now the most mediocre [first-place](#) team in baseball history. In their season opener Monday night against Atlanta, the Bucs provided plenty of evidence that this year will turn out like the last 15. They blew a five-run lead in the ninth by walking four batters and booting an easy fly ball. Pirate players said they'd [never seen anything like it](#), not even in Little

League. For an inning, it looked like the team had gone on strike to [demand more money](#).

But to every Buc fan's surprise, the Pirates won, anyway—12-11 in 12 innings—and with no game Tuesday, Pittsburgh has been above .500 for two glorious days. New General Manager [Neal Huntington](#) e-mailed me on Monday to promise that the team's new regime is determined to build an organization that will make the people of Pittsburgh proud again. That might take a while. For now, we're content to make the people of Atlanta feel really embarrassed. ... **1:35 p.m.** ([link](#))

**Tuesday, April 1, 2008**

**[Danger Is My Middle Name:](#)** Outgoing Senator Larry Craig can take consolation in one thing: out in Idaho, everyone wants his seat. Fourteen candidates have filed to run for the Senate, including [eight Republicans, two Democrats, two Independents, and a Libertarian](#). Hal Styles Jr. of Desert Hot Springs, California, entered the Republican primary, [even though he has never been to Idaho](#). "I know I'll love it because, clean air, clean water and many, many, many mountains," he says. "My heart, my mind, my body, my soul, my thoughts are in this to win."

The general election will likely be a rematch between former Democratic congressman [Larry LaRocco](#) and Republican Lt. Gov. (and former governor) [Jim Risch](#). If Idahoans find those two insufficiently embarrassing, however, a number of fringe candidates have lined up to take Craig's place. According to [CO](#), one Independent, Rex Rammel, is a former elk rancher who is angry that Risch ordered state wildlife officials to shoot some of his elk that got away. The Libertarian, Kent A. Marmon, is running against "[the ever-expanding Socialist agenda](#)" he claims is being pushed by Democratic congressmen like John Dingell.

But by far the most creative third-party candidate is Marvin Richardson, an organic strawberry farmer who went to court to change his name to "Pro-Life." Two years ago, he made that his middle name and tried to run for governor as Marvin "Pro-Life" Richardson. State election officials ruled that middle names couldn't be used to make a political statement on the ballot. As plain old Marvin Richardson, he won [just 1.6% of the vote](#).

Now that "Pro-Life" is his full name, the state had to [let him run that way on the ballot](#). He told the *Idaho Press-Tribune* that with the name change, he should win 5%. He plans to run for office

every two years for as long as he lives: "If I save one baby's life, it will be worth it."

As the *Press-Tribune* points out, Pro-Life is not a single-issue candidate, but has a comprehensive platform. In addition to abortion, he opposes "homosexuality, adultery, and fornication." He wants the pro-life movement to refer to abortion as "murder," although he has not yet insisted pro-choice candidates change their name to that.

Idaho Republicans and anti-abortion activists don't share Pro-Life's enthusiasm. They worry that conservative voters will check the box next to both Pro-Life and the Republican candidate, thereby spoiling their ballots. So last week, the Idaho Secretary of State persuaded both houses of the legislature to pass [emergency legislation](#) to clarify that "voters are casting a vote for a person and not a political proposition." Under the legislation, candidates who appear to have changed their names to "convey a political message" will be outed on the ballot as "a person, formerly known as ...." The Prince Bill will go to the governor for signature this week.

According to the Associated Press, Pro-Life accuses legislators of "[trying to legislate intelligence](#)"—a charge not often hurled at the Idaho legislature. "The people that vote for me are more intelligent than to have something defined in legislation like this," he says.

Of course, Idahoans who really want to make a political statement will still be able to outsmart the Prince Bill. Nothing in the legislation prohibits Idaho parents who feel strongly about issues from naming their children Pro-Life or Pro-Gun at birth. For that matter, Marvin Richardson has changed his name so many times that if he changes it again, the ballot might have to describe him as "a person formerly known as 'Pro-Life.'" Or he could just change his name to Mitt Romney.

On the other hand, Republicans and Democrats alike can breathe a sign of relief over another unintended effect: the new law foils Larry Craig's best strategy for a comeback. Before the law, Craig could have changed his name to "Not Gay" and won in a landslide. "A person formerly known as Not Gay" is more like it. ... **5:27 p.m.** ([link](#))

**Friday, Mar. 28, 2008**

**[We Are Family:](#)** Midway through the run-up to the next primary, the presidential campaigns are searching for fresh ways to reach the voters of Pennsylvania. My grandparents left Pittsburgh more than 80 years ago, so my Pennsylvania roots are distant. But I still think I can speak for at least half the state in suggesting one bold proposal we long for every April: a plan to rescue one of the



most mediocre teams in baseball history, the Pittsburgh Pirates.

Granted, the nation faces more urgent crises. But in hard times, people often look to sports for solace. To blue-collar workers in taverns across western Pennsylvania, watching the Pirates lose night after night is as predictably grim as the Bush economy. The lowly Bucs are the reigning disappointment in the world of sport—with a batting average that seems pegged to the dollar and prospects of victory in line with the war in Iraq.

The Pittsburgh franchise hasn't finished above .500 since 1992. If, as universally predicted, the Pirates turn in their 16<sup>th</sup> consecutive losing season this year, they will tie the all-time frustration record for professional sport set by the Philadelphia Phillies in the 1930s and '40s.

Pittsburgh is still a proud, vibrant city, which has rebounded handsomely from losses far more consequential than the Pirates'. The once-proud Pirates, by contrast, show plenty of rust but no signs of recovery. In 1992, the team was an inning away from the World Series, when the Atlanta Braves scored three runs in the bottom of the ninth to steal Game 7 of the National League Championship Series. The Braves soon moved to the NL East en route to winning 14 consecutive division titles, the longest in sports history. The Pirates moved from the East to the Central and began their soon-to-be-record-setting plunge in the opposite direction.

On Monday, the Pirates return to Atlanta for Opening Day against the Braves. Baseball analysts no longer give a reason in predicting another last-place Bucco finish. This year, the *Washington Post* didn't even bother to come up with a new joke. Last season's [Post preview](#) said:

**Blech. This Pirates team is so mediocre, so uninteresting, so destined for last place, we don't know if we can squeeze another sentence out of it for this capsule we're being paid to write. But here's one. ... The Pirates haven't had a winning season since 1992, and that streak will**

**continue this year. That's still not long enough? Well, here's another line! Hey—two sentences in one line! Make that three! And here's another! See how easy that is?**

This year, [the same Post analyst](#) wrote:

**Okay, folks, here's the deal: We need to fill precisely 4.22 column-inches of type with information about the faceless, tasteless Pirates, and as usual we're not sure we can do it. But guess what? We're already at .95 inches, and we're just getting started! Wait—make that 1.19 inches. ... Should they finish below .500 again (and let's be honest, how can they not?), they will tie the Phillies of 1933-48 for the most consecutive losing seasons. (By the way, that's 3.53 inches, and we haven't even had to mention new manager John Russell, Capps's promise as a closer or the vast potential of the Snell-Gorzalanny duo.) There: 4.22 inches. Piece of cake."**

So now the Pirates even hold the record for consecutive seasons as victims of the same bad joke.

Pittsburgh faces all the challenges of a small-market team. Moreover, as David Maraniss pointed out in his lyrical biography, [Clemente](#), the first love for Pittsburgh fans has long been football, not baseball. These days, no one can blame them.

Seven years ago, in a desperate bid to revive the Pirates' fortunes, the city built PNC Park, a gorgeous field with [the most spectacular view in baseball](#). From behind home plate, you can look out on the entire expanse of American economic history—from the [Allegheny River](#) to [1920s-era steel suspension bridges](#) to gleaming glass skyscrapers.

The result? As Pittsburgh writer Don Spagnolo noted last year in "[79 Reasons Why It's Hard To Be](#)



[a Pirates Fan](#)," Pittsburgh now has "the best stadium in the country, soiled by the worst team." (The *Onion* once suggested, "[PNC Park Threatens To Leave Pittsburgh Unless Better Team Is Built](#).") Spagnolo notes that the city already set some kind of record by hosting baseball's All-Star game in 1994 and 2006 without a single winning season in between.

Although the Pirates' best player, Jason Bay, is from Canada, if Pittsburgh fans have suffered because of trade, the blame belongs not to NAFTA but to an inept front office. Jason Schmidt, now one of the top 100 strikeout aces in history, was traded to the Giants. Another, Tim Wakefield, left for the Red Sox. Franchise player Aramis Ramirez was dealt to the Cubs. When owners sell off members of a winning team, it's called a fire sale. The Pirates have been more like a yard sale. In 2003, when the Cubs nearly made the Series, the Pirates supplied one-third of their [starting lineup](#).

In the early '80s, an angry fan famously threw a battery at Pirate outfielder Dave Parker. Last June, fans registered their frustration in a more constructive way. To protest more than a decade of ownership mismanagement, they launched a Web site, [IrateFans.com](#), and organized a "Fans for Change" walkout after the third inning of a home game. Unfortunately, only a few hundred fans who left their seats actually left the game; most just got up to get beer.

This year, fans are still for change but highly skeptical. In an online interview, the new team president admitted, "The Pirates are not in a rebuilding mode. We're in a building mode." One fan asked bitterly, "[How many home runs will the 'change in atmosphere' hit this season?](#)"

I've been a Pirate fan for four decades—the first glorious, the second dreary, the last two a long march from despair to downright humiliation. In more promising times, my wife proposed to me at Three Rivers Stadium, where we returned for our honeymoon. On the bright side, the 2001 [implosion of Three Rivers](#) enabled me to find two red plastic stadium seats as an anniversary present on eBay.

Our children live for baseball but laugh at our Pirate caps—and, at ages 12 and 14, haven't been alive to see a winning Pirate season. Yet like so

many in western Pennsylvania, I've been a Pirate fan too long to be retrained to root for somebody else.

After 15 years, we Bucs fans aren't asking for miracles. We just want what came so easily to the pre-2004 Red Sox, the post-1908 Cubs, and the other great losing teams of all time: sympathy. Those other teams are no longer reliable: The Red Sox have become a dynasty; 2008 really could be the Cubs' year. If you want a lovable loser that will never let you down, the Pittsburgh Pirates could be your team, too. ... **12:06 p.m.** ([link](#))

**Thursday, Mar. 13, 2008**

[Craigenfreude](#): In a new high for the partisan divide, a mini-debate has broken out in far-flung corners of the blogosphere on the urgent question: Who's the bigger hypocrite, Larry Craig or Eliot Spitzer?

Conservative blogger Michael Medved of [Townhall](#) offers a long list of reasons why Craig doesn't need to go as urgently as Spitzer did. He finds Craig less hypocritical ("trolling for sex in a men's room, doesn't logically require that you support gay marriage"), much easier to pity, and "pathetic and vulnerable" in a way Spitzer is not. Liberal blogger [Anonymous Is a Woman](#) counters that while Craig and Louisiana Sen. David Vitter remain in office, at least Spitzer resigned.

Warning, much political baggage may look alike. So, party labels aside, who's the bigger hypocrite? Certainly, a politician caught red-handed committing the very crimes he used to prosecute can make a strong case for himself. In his resignation speech, Spitzer admitted as much: "Over the course of my public life, I have insisted, I believe correctly, that people, regardless of their position or power, take responsibility for their conduct. I can and will ask no less of myself."

Moreover, for all the [conservative complaints about media bias](#), the circumstances of Spitzer's fall from grace ensure that tales of his hypocrisy will reverberate louder and longer than Craig's. Already [a media star](#) in the media capital of the world, he managed to destroy his career with a flair even a tabloid editor couldn't have imagined. Every detail of his case is more titillating than Craig's—call girls

with MySpace pages and stories to tell, not a lone cop who won't talk to the press; hotel suites instead of bathroom stalls; bank rolls instead of toilet rolls; [wide angles](#) instead of wide stances; a club for emperors, not [Red Carpet](#).

Spitzer flew much closer to the sun than Craig, so his sudden plunge is the far greater political tragedy. No matter how far his dive, Craig couldn't make that kind of splash. You'll never see the headline "Craig Resigns" splashed across six columns of the *New York Times*. Of course, since he refuses to resign, you won't see it in the *Idaho Statesman*, either.

Yet out of stubborn home-state chauvinism, if nothing else, we Idahoans still marvel at the level of hypocrisy our boy has achieved, even without all the wealth, fame, and privilege that a rich New Yorker was handed on a silver platter. Many Easterners think it's easy for an Idahoan to be embarrassing—that just being from Boise means you're halfway there.

We disagree. Craig didn't grow up in the center of attention, surrounded by money, glamour, and all the accouterments of hypocrisy. He grew up in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by mountains. When he got arrested, he didn't have paid help to bring him down. No Mann Act for our guy: He carried his own bags and did his own travel.

Larry Craig is a self-made hypocrite. He achieved his humiliation the old-fashioned way: He earned it.

Unlike Spitzer, who folded his cards without a fight, Craig upped the ante by privately admitting guilt, then publicly denying it. His lawyers filed yet another appellate brief this week, insisting that the prosecution is wrong to accuse him of making a "[prehensile stare](#)."

While it's admittedly a low standard, Craig may have had his least-awful week since his scandal broke in August. A Minnesota jury acquitted a man who was arrested by the same airport sting operation. Craig [didn't finish last](#) in the Senate power rankings by Congress.org. Thanks to Spitzer, Craig can now tell folks back home that whatever they think of what he did, at least they don't have to be embarrassed by how much he

spent. In fact, he is probably feeling some *Craigenfreude*—taking pleasure in someone else's troubles because those troubles leave people a little less time to take pleasure in your own.

Like misery, hypocrisy loves company—which, for both Spitzer and Craig, turned out to be the problem. But Spitzer was right to step down, and Craig should long ago have done the same. Politics is a tragic place to chase your demons. ... **5:30 p.m.** ([link](#))

**Wednesday, Mar. 5, 2008**

**All the Way:** As death-defying Clinton comebacks go, the primaries in Ohio and Texas were very nearly not heart-stopping enough. On Monday, public polls started predicting a Clinton rebound, threatening to spoil the key to any wild ride: surprise. Luckily, the early exit polls on Tuesday evening showed Obama with narrow leads in both do-or-die states, giving those of us in Clinton World who live for such moments a few more hours to stare into the abyss.

Now that the race is once again up for grabs, much of the political establishment is dreading the seven-week slog to the next big primary in Pennsylvania. Many journalists had wanted to go home and put off seeing Scranton until [The Office](#) returns on April 10. Some Democrats in Washington were in a rush to find out the winner so they could decide who they've been for all along.

As a Clintonite, I'm delighted that the show will go on. But even if I were on the sidelines, my reaction would have been the same. No matter which team you're rooting for, you've got to admit: We will never see another contest like this one, and the political junkie in all of us hopes it will never end.

It looks like we could get our wish—so we might as well rejoice and be glad in it. A long, exciting race for the nomination will be good for the Democratic Party, good for the eventual nominee, and the ride of a lifetime for every true political fan.

For the party, the benefits are obvious: By making this contest go the distance, the voters have done what party leaders wanted to do all along. This cycle, the Democratic National Committee was

desperate to avoid the front-loaded calendar that backfired last time. As [David Greenberg](#) points out, the 2004 race was over by the first week of March—and promptly handed Republicans a full eight months to destroy our nominee. This time, the DNC begged states to back-load the calendar, even offering bonus delegates for moving primaries to late spring. Two dozen states flocked to Super Tuesday anyway.

Happily, voters took matters into their own hands and gave the spring states more clout than party leaders ever could have hoped for. Last fall, NPR ran a whimsical story about [the plight of South Dakota voters](#), whose June 3 contest is the last primary (along with Montana) on the calendar. Now restaurateurs, innkeepers, and vendors from Pierre to Rapid City look forward to that primary as Christmas in June.

But the national party, state parties, and Sioux Falls cafes aren't the only ones who'll benefit. Contrary to the conventional wisdom, the biggest beneficiaries of a protracted battle for the nomination are the two contestants themselves. Primaries are designed to be a warm-up for the general election, and a few more months of spring training will only improve their swings for the fall.

And let's face it: These two candidates know how to put on a show. Both are raising astonishing sums of money and attracting swarms of voters to the polls. Over the past month, their three head-to-head debates have drawn the largest audiences in cable television history. The second half of last week's MSNBC debate was the most watched show on any channel, with [nearly 8 million viewers](#). An astonishing 4 million people tuned in to watch MSNBC's post-debate analysis, an experience so excruciating that it's as if every person in the Bay Area picked the same night to jump off the Golden Gate Bridge.

The permanent campaign turns out to be the best reality show ever invented. Any contest that can sustain that kind of excitement is like the World Series of poker: The value of the pot goes up with each hand, and whoever wins it won't be the least bit sorry that both sides went all-in.

No matter how it turns out, all of us who love politics have to pinch ourselves that we're alive to

see a race that future generations will only read about. Most campaigns, even winning ones, only seem historic in retrospect. This time, we already know it's one for the ages; we just don't know how, when, or whether it's going to end.

Even journalists who dread spending the next seven weeks on the Pennsylvania Turnpike have to shake their heads in wonderment. In the lede of their lead story in Wednesday's *Washington Post*, Dan Balz and Jon Cohen referred to "[the remarkable contest](#)" that could stretch on till summer. They didn't sign on to spend the spring in Scranton and Sioux Falls. But, like the rest of us, they wouldn't miss this amazing stretch of history for anything. ... **11:59 p.m.** ([link](#))

**Monday, Feb. 25, 2008**

**Hope Springs Eternal:** With this weekend's [victory in Puerto Rico](#) and even more resounding [triumph over the New York Times](#), John McCain moved within 200 delegates of mathematically clinching the Republican nomination. Mike Huckabee is [having a good time](#) playing out the string, but the rest of us have been forced to get on with our lives and accept that it's just not the same without Mitt.

But soft! What light through yonder window breaks? Out in Salt Lake City, [in an interview with the Deseret Morning News](#), Josh Romney leaves open the possibility that his father might get back in the race:

**Josh Romney called speculation that his father could be back in the race as either a vice presidential candidate or even at the top of the ticket as the GOP's presidential candidate "possible. Unlikely, but possible."**

That's not much of an opening and no doubt more of one than he intended. But from mountain to prairie, the groundswell is spreading. Endorsements are flooding in from conservative bloggers like [this one](#):

**Mitt Romney was not my first choice for a presidential candidate, but he came third**

**after Duncan Hunter and Fred Thompson. ... I would love to see Mitt reenter the race.**

Even if re-entry is too much to hope for, Josh hints that another Romney comeback may be in the works. He says he has been approached about running for Congress in Utah's 2<sup>nd</sup> District.

That, too, may be an unlikely trial balloon. Josh is just 32, has three young children, and would face a Democratic incumbent, Rep. Jim Matheson, who is [one of the most popular politicians in the state](#). Matheson's father was a governor, too. But unlike Mitt Romney, Scott Matheson was governor of Utah.

If Mitt Romney has his eye on the No. 2 spot, Josh didn't do him any favors. "It's one thing to campaign for my dad, someone whose principles I line up with almost entirely," he told the *Morning News*. "I can't say the same thing for Sen. McCain."

Even so, Romney watchers can only take heart that after a year on the campaign trail, Josh has bounced back so quickly. "I was not that upset," he says of his father's defeat. "I didn't cry or anything."

In his year on the stump, Josh came across as the most down-to-earth of the Romney boys. He visited all 99 of Iowa's counties in the campaign Winnebago, [the Mitt Mobile](#). He joked about [his father's faults](#), such as "he has way too much energy." He let a Fox newswoman interview him [in the master bedroom of the Mitt Mobile](#). (He showed her the air fresheners.) He blogged about the [moose, salmon, and whale](#) he ate while campaigning in Alaska—but when the feast was over, he delivered the Super Tuesday state for his dad.

As Jonathan Martin of *Politico* reported last summer, Josh was campaigning with his parents at the Fourth of July parade in Clear Lake, Iowa, [when the Romneys ran into the Clintons](#). After Mitt told the Clintons how many counties Josh had visited, Hillary said, "You've got this built-in campaign team with your sons." Mitt replied, to Ann's apparent dismay, "If we had known, we would've had more."

We'll never know whether that could have made the difference. For now, we'll have to settle for the unlikely but possible hope that Mitt will come back to take another bow. ... **4:13 p.m.** ([link](#))

**Monday, Feb. 11, 2008**

**Face Time:** When Ralph Reed showed up at a Romney fundraiser last May, [Mitt thought he was Gary Bauer](#) – perpetuating the tiresome stereotype that like some Reeds, all Christian conservatives look alike. Now, in Mitt's hour of need, Ralph is returning the favor. According to the *Washington Times*, he and 50 other right-wing leaders met with Romney on Thursday "to discuss the former Massachusetts governor becoming [the face of conservatism](#)."

Nothing against Romney, who surely would have been a better president than he let on. But if he were "the face of conservatism," he'd be planning his acceptance speech, not interviewing with Ralph Reed and friends for the next time around.

Conservatives could not have imagined it would end this way: the movement that produced Ollie North, Alan Keyes, and ardent armies of true believers, now mulling over an arranged marriage of convenience with a Harvard man who converted for the occasion. George Will must be reaching for his Yeats: "Was it for this ... that all that blood was shed?"

For more than a year, Republican presidential candidates tried to win the Reagan Primary. Their final tableau came at a debate in the Gipper's library, with his airplane as a backdrop and his widow in the front row. It was bad enough to see them reach back 20 years to find a conservative president they could believe in, but this might be worse: Now Romney's competing to claim he's the biggest conservative *loser* since Reagan. If McCain comes up short like Gerald Ford, Mitt wants to launch a comeback like it's 1976.

Even conservative leaders can't hide their astonishment over finding themselves in this position. "If someone had suggested a year ago and a half ago that we would be welcoming Mitt Romney as a potential leader of the conservative movement, no one would have believed it," American Conservative Union chairman David

Keene reportedly told the group. "But over the last year and a half, he has convinced us he is one of us and walks with us."

Conservative activist Jay Sekulow told the *Washington Times* that Romney is a "turnaround specialist" who can revive conservatism's fortunes. But presumably, Romney's number-crunching skills are the last thing the movement needs: there are no voters left to fire.

To be sure, Mitt was with conservatives when the music stopped. Right-wing activists who voted in the [CPAC straw poll](#) narrowly supported him over McCain, 35% to 34%. By comparison, they favored getting out of the United Nations by 57% to 42% and opposed a foreign policy based on spreading democracy by 82% to 15%. Small-government conservatism trounced social conservatism 59% to 22%, with only 16% for national-security conservatism.

As voters reminded him more Tuesdays than not, Mitt Romney is not quite Ronald Reagan. He doesn't have an issue like the Panama Canal. Far from taking the race down to the wire, he'll end up third. While he's a good communicator, many voters looking for the face of conservatism couldn't see past what one analyst in the *Deseret News* described as the ["CEO robot from Jupiter."](#)

If anything, Romney was born to be the face of the Ford wing of the Republican Party – an economic conservative with only a passing interest in the other two legs of Reagan's conservative stool. Like Ford, Mitt won the Michigan primary. He won all the places he calls home, and it's not his fault his father wasn't governor of more states.

Romney does have one advantage. With a conservative president nearing historic lows in the polls and a presumptive nominee more intent on leading the country, heading the conservative movement might be like running the 2002 Olympics – a job nobody else wants.

Paul Erickson, the Romney strategist who organized the conservative powwow, called McCain's nomination "an existential crisis for the Republican Party," and held out Mitt as a possible Messiah: "You could tell everybody at the table

sitting with Romney was asking himself: 'Is he the one?'"

Romney has demonstrated many strengths over the years, but impersonating a diehard conservative and leading a confused movement out of the wilderness aren't foremost among them. It might be time for the right to take up another existential question: If conservatism needs Mitt Romney and Ralph Reed to make a comeback, is there enough face left to save? ... **3:37 p.m.** ([link](#))

**Thursday, Feb. 7, 2008**

**[Romney, We Hardly Knew Ye](#):** When Mitt Romney launched his campaign last year, he struck many Republicans as the perfect candidate. He was a businessman with a Midas touch, an optimist with a charmed life and family, a governor who had slain the Democratic dragon in the blue state Republicans love to hate. In a race against national heroes like John McCain and Rudy Giuliani, he started out as a dark horse, but to handicappers, he was a dark horse with great teeth.

When Democrats looked at Romney, we also saw the perfect candidate—for us to run against. The best presidential candidates have the ability to change people's minds. Mitt Romney never got that far because he never failed to change his own mind first.

So when Romney gamely suspended his campaign this afternoon, there was heartfelt sadness on both sides of the aisle. Democrats are sorry to lose an adversary whose ideological marathon vividly illustrated the vast distance a man must travel to reach the right wing of the Republican Party. Romney fans lose a candidate who just three months ago led the polls in Iowa and New Hampshire and was the smart pick to win the nomination.

With a formidable nominee in John McCain, the GOP won't be sorry. But Romney's farewell at the Conservative Political Action Committee meeting shows how far the once-mighty right wing has fallen. In an introduction laced with barbs in McCain's direction, Laura Ingraham's description of Mitt as "a conservative's conservative" said all there is to say about Romney's campaign and the state of the conservative movement. If their last,



best hope is a guy who only signed up two years ago and could hardly convince them he belonged, the movement is in even worse shape than it looks.

Had Romney run on his real strength—as an intelligent, pragmatic, and competent manager—his road to the nomination might have gone the way of Rudy Giuliani's. Yet ironically, his eagerness to preach the conservative gospel brought on his demise. Romney pandered with conviction. He even tried to make it a virtue, defending his conversion on abortion by telling audiences that he would never apologize for being a latecomer to the cause of standing up for human life. Conservatives thanked him for trying but preferred the genuine article. In Iowa, Romney came in second to a true believer, and New Hampshire doesn't have enough diehards to put him over the top.

Romney's best week came in Michigan, when a sinking economy gave him a chance to talk about the one subject where his party credentials were in order. In Michigan, Romney sounded like a 21<sup>st</sup>-century version of the business Republicans who dominated that state in the '50s and '60s—proud, decent, organization men like Gerald Ford and George Romney. As he sold his plan to turn the Michigan economy around, Mitt seemed as surprised as the voters by how much better he could be when he genuinely cared about the subject.

By then, however, he had been too many things to too many people for too long. McCain was authentic, Huckabee was conservative, and Romney couldn't convince enough voters he was either one.

Good sport to the end, Romney went down pandering. His swansong at CPAC touched all the right's hot buttons. He blamed out-of-wedlock births on government programs, attacks on religion, and "tolerance for pornography." He got his biggest applause for attacking the welfare state, declaring dependency a culture-killing poison that is "death to initiative."

Even in defeat, he gave glimpses of the Mitt we'll miss—the lovably square, *Father Knows Best* figure with the impossibly wholesome family and perfect life. He talked about taking "a weed-whacker to

regulations." He warned that we might soon become "the France of the 21<sup>st</sup> century." He pointed out that he had won nearly as many states as McCain, but joked awkwardly with the ultraconservative audience that he lost "because size does matter."

He didn't say whether we'll have the Romneys to kick around anymore. But with the family fortune largely intact and five sons to carry on the torch, we can keep hope alive. In the Salt Lake City paper this morning, a leading political scientist predicted that if Democrats win the White House in 2008, Romney "[would automatically be a frontrunner for 2012.](#)"

It's hard to imagine a more perfect outcome. For now, sadness reigns. As the Five Brothers might say, somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout; but there is no joy in Mittville—Guy Smiley has dropped out. ... **5:42 p.m.** ([link](#))

## **Tuesday, Feb. 5, 2008**

**Mittmentum:** With John McCain on cruise control toward the Republican nomination, Mitt Romney finds himself in a desperate quest to rally true believers – a role for which his even temper and uneven record leave him spectacularly unsuited. Romney knows how to tell the party faithful everything they want to hear. But it's not easy for a man who prides himself on his optimism, polish, and good fortune to stir anger and mutiny in the conservative base. Only a pitchfork rebellion can stop McCain now, and Luddites won't man the ramparts because they like your PowerPoint.

So far, the Republican base seems neither shaken nor stirred. McCain has a commanding 2-1 margin in national polls, and leads Romney most everywhere except California, where Mitt hopes for an upset tonight. Professional troublemakers like Ann Coulter and Rush Limbaugh are up in arms, trying to persuade their followers that McCain is somehow Hillary by other means. On Monday, Limbaugh did his best imitation of Romney's stump speech, dubbing Mitt the only candidate who stands for all three legs of the conservative stool. Strange bedfellows indeed: Rush-Romney is like a hot-blooded android – the first Dittohead-Conehead pairing in galactic history.

On Saturday, Mitt Romney wandered to the back of his campaign plane and told the press, "[These droids aren't the droids you're looking for.](#)" Oddly enough, that's exactly the reaction most Republicans have had to his campaign.

But in the home stretch, Romney has energized one key part of his base: his own family. Yesterday, the Romney boys set a campaign record by putting up six posts on the Five Brothers blog – matching their high from when they launched last April. Mitt may be down, but the Five Brothers are back.

The past month has been grim for the happy-go-lucky Romney boys. They sometimes went days between posts. When they did post, it was often from [states they had just campaigned in and lost](#). Bright spots were hard to come by. After South Carolina, Tagg found a "[Romney girl](#)" video, set to the tune of "1985," in which a smiling young Alabaman named Danielle sang of Mitt as the next Reagan. One commenter recommended raising \$3 million to run the clip as a Super Bowl ad; another asked Danielle out on behalf of his own five sons. A few days later, Matt put up a clip of a [computerized prank call](#) to his dad, pretending to be Arnold Schwarzenegger – prompting a priceless exchange between robo-candidate and Terminator. Then the real Arnold spoiled the joke by endorsing the real McCain.

In the run-up to Super Tuesday, however, a spring is back in the Five Brothers' step. On Sunday, Josh wrote a post about his campaign trip to Alaska. Richard Nixon may have lost in 1960 because his pledge to campaign in all 50 states forced him to spend the last weekend in Alaska. That didn't stop Josh Romney, who posted a [gorgeous photo of Mount McKinley](#) and a snapshot of some Romney supporters shivering somewhere outside Fairbanks, where the high was 13 below. He wrote, "I sampled all of the Alaskan classics: moose, salmon and whale. Oh so good." Eating whale would certainly be red meat for a liberal crowd, but conservatives loved it too. "Moose is good stuff," one fan wrote. Another supporter mentioned friends who've gone on missions abroad and "talk about eating dog, horse, cow stomach, bugs." Rush, take note: McCain was ordering room service at the Hanoi Hilton while Mitt was keeping the faith by choking down tripe in Paris.

The rest of the family sounds like it's on the trail of big game as well. Ben Romney, the least prolific of the Five Brothers, didn't post from Thanksgiving through the South Carolina primary. Yesterday, he posted twice in one day – with a link to Limbaugh and a helpful guide to tonight's results, noting that in the past week members of the Romney family have campaigned in 17 of 21 states up for grabs on Super Tuesday. Now we can scientifically measure the Romney effect, by comparing the results in those 17 states with the four states (Idaho, Montana, Connecticut, Arizona) no Romney visited. After Huckabee's victory in West Virginia, the early score is 1-0 in favor of no Romneys.

Tagg, the team captain, also posted twice, urging the faithful to "Keep Fighting," and touting Mitt's evangelical appeal: "The Base Is Beginning to Rally." Back in June, Tagg joked with readers about [who would win a family farting contest](#). Now he's quoting evangelical Christian ministers. The brothers are so focused on the race, they haven't even mentioned their beloved Patriots' loss, although there has been no word from young Craig, the one they [tease](#) as [a Tom Brady lookalike](#).

Of course, if the Republican race ends tonight, the inheritance Mitt has told the boys not to count on will be safe at last. By all accounts, they couldn't care less. They seem to share Tagg's easy-come-easy-go view that no matter what happens, this will have been the best trip the family has ever taken, and [this time no dogs were harmed along the way](#) (just moose, salmon, and whale).

At the moment, the Five Brothers must feel the same nostalgia to keep going that the rest of us will feel for their antics when they're gone. Back when the campaign began, Tagg joked that they would love their father win or lose, although he might become something of a national laughingstock in the meantime. Mitt did his part, but whatever happens tonight, he can be proud the firewall he cares most about – his family – has held up its end of the bargain. ... **6:15 p.m.** ([link](#))

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**the undercover economist**  
**What Is "Income per Natural"?**

How a new way to count national income could change how we think about immigration and development.

By Tim Harford

Saturday, April 19, 2008, at 12:11 AM ET

Which nation produces the richest people in the world? You might think that is an easy question to answer: Just grab the latest figures from the International Monetary Fund, and you'll see that the answer is Luxembourg (\$102,000 gross domestic product per head in 2007). The United States is in ninth place (\$46,000) and the U.K. in 11<sup>th</sup> (\$45,000).

There are some methodological wrinkles to iron out: what exchange rate to use, for instance. And for the poorest countries, such as Liberia (\$200 dollars per person in 2007) or Burundi (\$130), the numbers involve some guesswork. But overall, these are not controversial statistics—unless you are [Lant Pritchett](#) or [Michael Clemens](#).

Pritchett, of Harvard's Kennedy School, and Clemens, of the Center for Global Development, a Washington, D.C., think tank, argue that my opening question should be answered in a radically different way. Rather than measuring the income of people who are now residents of Liberia, Clemens and Pritchett have produced [a research paper estimating the income](#) earned by people who were born in (say) Liberia, regardless of where they now live—what Clemens and Pritchett call "income per natural" of Liberians.

For Luxembourg—or any other rich country—there is a trivial difference between income per natural and more conventional measures of national income. But for Liberia, the difference is anything but trivial: The Liberian-born make 50 percent more than Liberian residents. Nor is Liberia unique: Clemens and Pritchett estimate that the income of the Samoan-born is nearly twice the income of the Samoan resident, and the Guyanese-born are more than twice as well-off as residents of Guyana.

These dramatic differences have a simple explanation: Many poor people became richer by leaving their country of birth. Clemens and Pritchett estimate that "two of every five living Mexicans who have escaped poverty did so by leaving Mexico; for Haitians it is four out of five."

There is a point to this exercise: Clemens and Pritchett want to call attention to the fact that migration has made a lot of migrants richer. Traditional measures of income tend to mask this fact. In rich countries, we usually ask whether migrants improve the lot of existing residents, not whether migration improves the lot of migrants. Meanwhile, the welfare of migrants rarely figures in debate in developing countries or in development institutions such as the World Bank, because the migrants have gone.

Simply because of the way the discussion is framed, the benefits to migrants tend to be ignored. Imagine a man who moves from earning 10,000 euros in Poland (an above-average wage) to 15,000 pounds in the U.K. (a below-average wage). Simple arithmetic says that he has reduced the average income of both countries; that could be true even if he has impoverished nobody and enriched himself a great deal.

The "income per natural" statistic is the latest in a long line of alternatives to gross domestic product, the standard measure of an economy's size. Others—variously championed by Nobel laureates such as Amartya Sen, Daniel Kahneman, Joseph Stiglitz, and the late James Tobin—try to adjust GDP to account for the depletion of natural resources, or to incorporate measures of health and education, or even (in Kahneman's case) to start from scratch with time-weighted accounts of happiness.

I sometimes wonder if these alternative measures make a difference to the way policy is conducted. After all, no government ever tried to maximize GDP, anyway, so why try so hard to measure something else? But Pritchett is convinced that the way the discussion is framed does make a difference; once we formally recognize that people can escape poverty by moving as well as by sitting still, we may start to regard migration as a legitimate source of economic development.

That, at least, is what Pritchett hopes. His next paper, with Michael Clemens, will argue that the pay gaps caused by racial and sex discrimination, while very real, are miniscule compared with the pay gaps caused by national boundaries. That should raise a few eyebrows. Do not expect this subject to go away while Pritchett is on the case.

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## today's blogs

### Serious About Syria

By Michael Weiss

Thursday, April 24, 2008, at 6:18 PM ET

Bloggers wonder how close Syria is to getting nukes and are hounding Karl Rove for questioning Barack Obama's bipartisanship.

*Serious about Syria:* The CIA [briefed](#) Congress Thursday on what it said was "eyepopping" evidence that Syria came "within weeks" of obtaining the capability to make nuclear weapons. The intelligence agency provided still photographs of the suspected facility, which Israel destroyed last September. [According](#) to the *Financial Times*, one such image shows Chon Chibu, a North Korean nuclear scientist, working with Syrian personnel. Chibu helped construct North Korea's Yongbyon

reactor; further photographic evidence suggests that the Syrian one is of the same design.

At the *Weekly Standard's* **Blog**, Jaime Sneider [complains](#) about those who buy the Syrian line that the facility wasn't for nukes: "[T]he real suckers are reporters, like Seymour Hersh, who buy this drivel. In his story last February, Hersh quotes anonymous Syrian officials claiming the facility only housed a chemical weapons program and the North Koreans were just ordinary construction workers. Yet Syria has extensive experience with chemical weapons and would not need the help of North Koreans to build them." And Lee at **Desert Conservative** [writes](#): "President Bush named these people as the 'Axis of Evil.' Why now is anyone surprised? Iran, Syria, North Korea and who else will go nuclear? Question is, which one, or two, will be first to use the bomb?"

But David Kurtz at **Talking Points Memo** [points](#) to the Syrian ambassador's warning of U.S. intelligence claims about Iraq to underscore that our credibility is nil: "Isn't there some sort of statute of limitations on our goof? I mean it's been five years since Colin Powell's UN presentation. And look at all we've done since: brought peace and stability to Iraq, made real progress on the Israel-Palestinian conflict, calmed world financial markets." The **Carpenter Report's** liberal Steven Benen [offers](#) a ditto: "The Bush gang probably didn't need another incident dealing with questionable intelligence about weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, but it looks like they have one anyway."

At **Israel Matzav**, Carl in Jerusalem [worries](#) about the intelligence-gathering implications: "I believe that now I understand why Israel is really upset over this Congressional briefing. It has nothing to do with its potential to embarrass Assad. Someone took that video, and quite likely they took it out in the open. Israel is afraid of that intelligence source (and possibly others) in Syria being compromised. It would be a shame for Israel to lose intelligence sources because a bunch of Senators and Representatives have Bush Dementia Syndrome."

Jimmie at the **Sundries Shack** [errs](#) on the side of the CIA over its critics: "The fact that there was no fuel at the time of the bombing doesn't mean there never would be nor that Syria wasn't trying to get fuel. I'd say that Assad had at least two, if not three, conduits for getting nuclear fuel: Iran, North Korea, and Russia. It seems awfully early ... to discount the possibility that a couple of guys who are not exactly married to the truth when it comes to their dealings with us are being honest with us now."

[Read](#) more about the CIA's Syrian nuke briefing.

*Karl on Barack*: After [analyzing](#) Barack Obama's electoral numbers, Karl Rove, writing from his perch at the *Wall Street Journal*, questions the candidate's raison d'être: "Mr. Obama's

call for postpartisanship looks unconvincing, when he is unable to point to a single important instance in his Senate career when he demonstrated bipartisanship. ... He has been only an observer, watching the action from a distance, thinking wry and sardonic and cynical thoughts to himself about his colleagues, mildly amused at their to-ing and fro-ing." Liberal bloggers' reactions range from "Who asked you?" to "Die, malignant troll-boy, die." But is Rove right?

Ed Morrissey at **Hot Air** [adds](#) to Rove's critique: "In a way, Obama is the Jon Stewart candidate. He sits on the edge of politics, making 'wry and sardonic' comments about what other people do without doing anything himself. No wonder younger voters love him; he gets to be ironic while taking no responsibility for anything. And when people press him for action, he'd prefer to eat his waffle in peace until he can find a way to act as a commentator rather than as a real agent for change."

Justin Paulette at **Political Machine** [writes](#): "[O]nce again, Rove makes clear why the left so hates and loathes him - he is dead on in his analysis." Cue hatred.

"I know Mr. Rove must really think himself clever in his continued (and flaccid) strategy to keep the Democratic primaries 'in-play,'" [writes](#) Larisa Alexandrovna at the **Huffington Post**. "Surely Mr. Rove must realize - given the alleged size of his brain (apparently in compensation for less fortunate aspects of his physique) - that keeping the Democratic primaries going and going and going is not going to make the John McCain-Jack Abramoff scandal go away."

**Andrew Sullivan** leaps to Obama's defense (surprise!) and [slashes](#) back at Rove: "The great clarifier of this primary season has been the in-gathering of most of the most toxic, cynical forces in American politics - Democrat and Republican - to extinguish the Obama campaign. In the end, Rove and Clinton are in the same party (Washington, Inc.) and play by the same rules (whatever they can say they are at any given moment). But they're losing."

To [which](#) Michael van der Galien at **PolitGazette** offers: "The problem with this kind of reasoning is, of course, that Obama hasn't himself to be an agent of change... at all. The only change he's bringing is constant whining, other than that, nothing new under the sky. When it comes to dirty politics, the man from Illinois is an expert. He has campaigned very negatively in Pennsylvania, and has tried to personally destroy Hillary Clinton ever since he announced he'd run for president. As if that's not enough, he's also an expert at twisting the Republican nominee's, John McCain, words."

[Read](#) more about Rove's Obama column.



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## today's blogs

### She's Back. Again.

By Morgan Smith

Wednesday, April 23, 2008, at 4:53 PM ET

Bloggers are all over Tuesday's Pennsylvania primary, where Hillary Clinton [kept alive her chances](#) for the Democratic nomination with a solid victory over Barack Obama.

Many bloggers think the result just lengthens the already drawn-out contest. **Carpenter Report's** liberal Steve Benen [sums up](#): "[The winning margin is] big enough to give Clinton a boost, but not big enough to change the overall dynamics of the race. It's big enough to keep the campaign going for quite a while, but not big enough to compel uncommitted superdelegates to get off the fence."

"Hillary's vanity campaign will continue on, trailing in delegates, trailing in the popular vote, trailing in enthusiasm and money, but not lacking in the firm resolve that only Hillary can save us all from our selves," [intones](#) John Cole of **Balloon Juice**. Liberal **Political Animal** Kevin Drum [concludes](#) that Clinton "seems to have won by roughly the same margin she would have won by even if she and Barack Obama hadn't just spent \$40 million there. In other words, the campaign was not only pointless, but pointless and wildly expensive."

Jonathan Stein at *Mother Jones's* **MoJo Blog** [attacks](#) the Clinton narrative that the primary proves the "tide is turning" back to her, observing: "What's funny about the Clinton campaign's message is that Clinton never trailed in Pennsylvania. One month ago, she was leading in the state by 15 percent, and she won Tuesday by 10 percent, hardly what practitioners of math would call a comeback. But the wielders of spin are not the same as the wielders of calculators." But the *Atlantic's* **Marc Ambinder** [points out](#) that "Obama had six weeks and an unlimited pool of money and a media that was on side, and he still did not win. Obama still has the burden of explaining why he cannot beat Clinton in one of these states." Obama supporter Markos Moulitsas at **Daily Kos** [explains](#), with a long list of reasons why Obama didn't take Pennsylvania, and he expresses annoyance at the implication "that somehow he's not 'electable' since he can't win every single state on the calendar."

**Huffington Post** blogger Dylan Loewe points out that Hillary cannot possibly overtake Obama in the delegate lead and [believes](#) that that makes her unelectable in the fall: "If the superdelegates give Clinton the nomination without her having won the popular vote or pledged delegate count, without any rational connection to the will of the people, an enormous swath of Democratic voters are likely to stay home in November."

But at **Real Clear Politics** Tom Bevan [defends](#) Clinton's campaign performance, declaring, "Like her or not, you have to be impressed by Hillary Clinton's resilience as a candidate. She's been up against the wall at least four times during this campaign, and every time she has come through with exactly what she needs to stay alive. ... [I]t's hard to dismiss the kind of guts and determination she's shown as the odds of her winning the nomination have gotten longer and longer." The former first lady also finds an unlikely champion in conservative *Times* columnist William Kristol, blogging at the *Weekly Standard's* **Blog**. "Maybe we should acknowledge that Hillary Clinton is a pretty impressive candidate," he [proposes](#). "She's tough, disciplined, and not unappealing. She's a good debater and adapts pretty quickly (if a bit clunkily) to campaign developments. Her campaign organization and strategists have been inferior to Obama's—but she's gotten more total votes than he (counting Michigan and Florida—the voters there are people too!). And she's done this while bearing the burden of her husband."

Bloggers also respond to a [New York Times editorial](#) reacting to the primary, in which the *NYT* said it was "past time" for Clinton "to acknowledge that the negativity, for which she is mostly responsible, does nothing but harm to her, her opponent, her party and the 2008 election." At the *New Republic's* **Plank**, Gabe Sherman [judges](#) the piece "surprisingly harsh" and proves "the paper was uncomfortable with the Clinton endorsement—and still is." **Protein Wisdom's** Karl [calls](#) the editorial board "bitter" and notes, "No candidate who has won as many votes and delegates as Clinton [hasn't](#) taken the fight to the convention."

At **Hot Air**, conservative Ed Morrissey considers the *Times's* argument and [wonders](#), "And just how would it look to Democrats in upcoming states to see Hillary shoved aside after winning Ohio and Pennsylvania by 10 points each? It would look like Obama couldn't beat her in a tough but fair contest, and he had to be rescued by the party establishment. ... Do Democrats really want to throw such a delicate and fragile candidate onto the top of their ticket for a general election?"

Writing from Indiana, **Shakesville's** Melissa McEwan [objects](#) to the editorial's assertion that "voters are getting tired" of the Democratic primary battle, grumping, "You see, some of us, out here in flyover country, haven't had our chance to vote yet. ... What we *are* tired of, however, is a bunch of fucking uppity wankstains trying to force an end to this primary before we get our chance to vote." Continuing with the snark, *Vanity Fair's* **James Wolcott** [synopsizes](#) "the Times harrumph": "Hillary Clinton's ruthless insistence on winning big-state primaries with traditional Democratic voters only hastens and strengthens the case that she drop out of the race and let Barack Obama finish his waffle."

[Read](#) more about the primary results. [Read](#) more reaction to the *New York Times* editorial. Watch [Clinton's response](#) to the



editorial on the *Today* show. In *Slate*, John Dickerson [writes](#) that the victory helps Clinton make her case to the superdelegates.

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## today's blogs

### Song Remains the Same

By Michael Weiss

Tuesday, April 22, 2008, at 6:24 PM ET

*Song remains the same:* The *New York Times* [has again challenged](#) John McCain's ethical conduct as a senator. At issue this time is his decadeslong relationship with Arizona developer Donald Diamond, who has raised more than \$250,000 on behalf of McCain's current presidential campaign. The *Times* reports, "Mr. McCain has helped Mr. Diamond with matters as small as forwarding a complaint in a regulatory skirmish over the endangered pygmy owl, and as large as introducing legislation remapping public lands."

At the **Plank**, the *New Republic's* Noam Scheiber [loves](#) this quote from Diamond: "I want my money back, for Christ's sake. Do you know how many cocktail parties I have to go to?" "How refreshing to have a fat-cat contributor actually fess up about the blindingly obvious point of all his contributions," says Scheiber, who thinks this story trips up McCain only because "he's much more sanctimonious than at least 80-90 percent of his colleagues" who do the same thing with their top contributors.

At **Hot Air**, conservative Ed Morrissey notes that one of the the article's authors, Jim Rutenberg, also had a byline in the famous [Vicki Iseman story](#) the [newspaper ran in February](#). Morrissey [concludes](#) that Rutenberg's "gotcha"—that he sponsored legislation to remap public land in a way that directly benefited Diamond's development business—isn't quite accurate. Morrissey writes: "[T]he legislation McCain sponsored didn't require the sale of the parcels at issue in Rutenberg's article at all. It authorized the Secretary of the Interior to swap land as deemed necessary and beneficial. Neither McCain nor his family had any personal stake in the land deals that Donald Diamond negotiated with Interior, nor did McCain write legislation requiring Interior to sell anything at all to Diamond."

Philip Klein at the conservative **American Spectator's** blog [sees](#) another dud for the Gray Lady: "The point that keeps getting made in the story is that post-Keating 5, McCain has made a name for himself trying to get money out of politics, and to avoid appearances of using his office improperly. But there's no allegation of actual wrongdoing or corruption here, and the *Times* even notes that on other occasions McCain publicly criticized Diamond, and 'has occasionally rebuffed Mr. Diamond's entreaties as inappropriate ...' Looks like strike two for the *Times*."

**Confederate Yankee** [says](#) he doesn't like McCain, but he likes this sort of "political hit piece" less: "For the story to have merit and legitimacy it needs a 'gotcha,' an impropriety, some sort of ethical or legal breach on behalf of the businessman by the politician. ... In fact, the only evidence the story supplies are specific instances where McCain rejected inappropriate interventions." However, Rick Moran at **Right Wing Nuthouse** [makes](#) no excuses: "McCain, of course, has the same problem Obama has; he sets himself up as a different kind of politician who is above mucking around in the political sewers with special interests while carrying on business as usual when it comes to his 'special friends.' In the larger scheme of things, this favor for Diamond is hardly a mortal sin. But as an example of campaign hypocrisy? Guilty as charged, Senator."

Liberal **Matt Yglesias** [thinks](#) it's an open-and-shut case but also not terribly worrisome against McCain's other demerits: "At the end of the day, this pales in comparison to McCain catastrophically wrongheaded ideas about foreign policy on the list of reasons not to vote for him. But it's yet another story which reveals how ultimately hollow the myth of John McCain as the great man of honor who'd never have his hands anywhere near the mucky side of politics is."

**The Reaction** [agrees](#): "While it is important to target McCain on the issues ... it is imperative that his facade of integrity, endlessly played up by the media, for whom he can usually no wrong, be exposed for what it is: a mask hiding a corrupt and hypocritical core."

[Read](#) more about the Diamond-McCain nexus.

*We did it:* Al-Qaida chief deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri has [lashed](#) out at Iran and Hezbollah for spreading the malicious lie that Israel was behind the Sept. 11 attacks. "The purpose of this lie is clear—[to suggest] that there are no heroes among the Sunnis who can hurt America as no else did in history. Iranian media snapped up this lie and repeated it," Zawahiri said in response to a question posed on an Islamic militant Web site.

**Jammie Wearing Fool** [writes](#): "That giant sucking sound you just heard was the air being let out of the Truther balloons. Granted, they'll just spin it to say Ayman al-Zawahiri is a neocon pawn working on orders of Dick Cheney."

At *Commentary's* **contentions**, David Hazony [offers](#) Zawihiri some unsolicited advice: "If you're really that mad at Iran, why don't you put your organization's efforts into taking out their nuclear program? That would really show them."

At **Prairie Pundit**, Merv [writes](#): "It is still interesting that truthers whether they are in Iran or in the US deny the obvious truth of the 9-11 attacks. I think they all do it for the same

reason. They want to deny the legitimacy of the US response to those attacks."

Of course, Bin Laden's No. 2 might have just been following the *Onion*:

[Read](#) more about Zawahiri's 9/11 conspiracy-theory debunking.

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## today's blogs

### Keystone Primary

By Alec Mouhibian

Monday, April 21, 2008, at 6:53 PM ET

Bloggers are previewing Tuesday's Pennsylvania primary and watching some inter-blogsphere mudslinging.

*Keystone primary*: Various polls [show](#) Hillary Clinton winning Pennsylvania on Tuesday by anywhere from five to 13 points. Public Policy Polling [has Barack Obama ahead](#) by three. Could a Keystone upset be in order?

No, [says](#) Geekesque at **DailKos**: "Once again we see Obamanation getting their expectations out of whack. ... Obama will not break 45% on Tuesday. He may not break 43%. So, the question is, are Obama supporters stupid enough to irrationally fuel expectations to give Clinton the appearance of another moral victory and defeat of expectations--thus handing a media win to her?" Sluicing the poll data at **First Read**, Chuck Todd [notes](#) that those blue-collar voters Obama offended are leaning toward Clinton. "She's up 54-33 among bowlers and 53-28 among gun owners; There were 13% undec. among bowlers and 17% undec. among gun owners. So while the poll shows Clinton with a narrow lead (and arguably a narrowing lead), the clues inside the numbers indicate this is her race to lose and that her lead could expand."

But while 10<sup>th</sup>-frame turnout among heat-packing bowlers will help Hillary, a report in *Politico* [indicates](#) she'd be better off if the vast numbers of newly registered voters stay home. Of the 217,000 newly registered voters and 178,000 party-switchers since January, "Obama was the preferred candidate for 62 percent of them."

Either way, according to **Clive Crook**, Obama's notorious "bitter" diatribe [won't figure](#): "The Democratic voters most likely to be offended by Mr Obama's sympathetic account of their errors are the white working class and they were backing Mrs Clinton anyway." Nevertheless, *Slate*'s Mickey Kaus [discusses](#) four ways to solve the "condescension conundrum" that could affect Obama in the general election.

But how big must Clinton win to stay alive in the race? "A 25-point victory in Pennsylvania, plus 20-point wins in later contests in West Virginia, Kentucky and Puerto Rico," according to a much-discussed [Bloomberg report](#). **Wonkette** has already [listed 10 reasons why it's over](#) for Hillary. They include: Her need to win 65 percent of the remaining delegates to break even, her record-low character ratings, and her failure to achieve the endorsement of Robert Reich.

At *Reason*, David Weigel tries to predict the prospective concession speech. "Two months from now, if Clinton cuts bait and leaves the race with the same 100-odd delegate deficit she's had since February, I wonder what we'll say the point of the long primary was," he [writes](#) at **Hit & Run**. "Vetting Obama? Full employment for political journalists? Ad revenue for local TV stations?"

[Read](#) more about the Pennsylvania primary. In *Slate*, read John Dickerson's dispatches from the trail [here](#) and [here](#). Cynthia Baughman [tries to figure out](#) if Pennsylvania delegates can change their mind. And Tim Noah wonders why Hillary Clinton [has not denounced or rejected](#) her endorsement from the man behind the vast right-wing conspiracy.

*Life imitates South Park*: A real-life Kyle-Cartman spat has emerged in the aftermath of Bill Kristol's *New York Times* [column](#) questioning Obama's faith by comparing his "bitter" comments to a statement by Karl Marx that "religious suffering is at the same time an expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, and the soul of a soulless condition. It is the opium of the people." The *New Republic*'s **Leon Wieseltier** and former *TNR* editor **Andrew Sullivan** are duking it out.

"A non-Christian manipulator of Christianity is calling a Christian a liar about his own faith," [wrote Sullivan](#) in response to Kristol. That sentence didn't pass over Sullivan's former colleague Wieseltier. "Ponder that early adjective," he [wrote](#) at the *New Republic*. "It is Jew baiting. ... If Kristol is wrong about Obama, it is not because Kristol is a Jew. So this fills me with a certain paschal wrath. Nice little blog you have there, Obama boy. Pity if frogs or locusts should happen to it. Let my people be!"

"Little? Boy?" [responds](#) Sullivan, denying the charge. "African-Americans and gay men have had one thing in common over the decades and centuries. When we are being put in our place by our superiors, we are called 'boys.' ... Obama is not a boy, and neither am I. And breaking through those barriers is one thing this election has come to be about."

From the sidelines, **Matt Yglesias** [asks](#): "noting the irony of Kristol's attack is now 'Jew-baiting'? We seem to be defining our problems down here. But in Wieseltier's view, this is the

equivalent of enslaving the entire people of Israel. And Wieseltier himself is, I guess, Moses?" The Jew-baiting charge "is completely baseless-- and, consequently, base," [adds](#) Norman Geras at **Norm Blog**. But at **Best of Both Worlds**, P O'Neill [chides](#) Sullivan's "poor line of attack: "[T]he simpler response to William Kristol would have been to ask him whether he agrees with his father that religion is necessary for the maintenance of social order.

[Read](#) more about Sullivan and Wieseltier.

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## today's papers Big Deal

By Daniel Politi

Friday, April 25, 2008, at 6:22 AM ET

The [New York Times](#) leads with news that the new Pakistani government is close to reaching a peace deal with leaders of the "the most militant tribes" in the [volatile border region](#). Although nothing is official yet, a top militant leader, Baitullah Mehsud, has ordered members of the Taliban Movement of Pakistan to stop all attacks and militant activities and warned that anyone who ignores his order will be punished. The *Wall Street Journal* leads its world-wide newsbox with word that the U.S. military claims to have [found evidence](#) that Iran is continuing to send weapons into Iraq, despite Tehran's pledge to take action to stop these shipments. Officials say the Iranian arms have date stamps indicating they were manufactured in the past two months. [USA Today](#) leads with word that a new report by the special inspector general for Iraq reconstruction says the Iraqi security forces are nowhere near ready, and it could be years before they have enough resources to secure the country. An audit found that the figures kept by the Iraqi government [substantially overestimate](#) the number of military and police officers, and there's no way of knowing how many of those listed in the payroll are actually on the job. For its part, the Pentagon insists the numbers are accurate.

The [Washington Post](#) leads with the Federal Aviation Administration acknowledging that managers in Dallas covered up mistakes by air traffic controllers by [blaming them on pilots](#). A new report, which the FAA declined to release, says the agency never appropriately cracked down on this problem even though similar allegations were made years ago. "The report is disturbing," the FAA acting administrator said. The [Los Angeles Times](#) leads with the Senate unanimously [voting for legislation](#) that would prohibit employers and health insurers from discriminating based on a person's genes. As more people begin to undergo genetic testing, companies would be prohibited from using this information to evaluate a customer or employee. The House is expected to approve the bill. "It's the first civil rights

bill of the new century of life sciences," Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., said.

The 15-point accord that is currently being negotiated between the Pakistani government and the militant leaders calls for an end to the fighting and for the [release of prisoners from both sides](#). Under the terms being discussed, the Pakistani military would also withdraw from a section of South Waziristan as long as the militants allow the local paramilitary force known as the Frontier Corps freedom to move around in the area. Followers of Mehsud, who is thought to have ordered the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, say the Pakistani military has already begun withdrawing from tribal regions, but officials deny those allegations and insist negotiations are ongoing.

Not surprisingly, U.S. officials aren't too keen on the idea of an accord with Meshsud, who is thought to be responsible for "many, if not most of the suicide attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan over the last two years," says the *NYT*. Previous attempts at reaching this type of cease-fire agreement haven't been successful, and the *Post* [points out](#) that some believe they actually allowed the militants to get stronger. Significantly, the draft accord makes [no mention](#) of halting attacks in Afghanistan.

Officials apparently plan on making their findings on the new Iranian weapons in Iraq public within the next few days, possibly Monday. The *WSJ* says that [the allegations](#) "mark a further hardening of U.S. rhetoric on Iran" at a time when military officials believe Tehran is increasing its support for Shiite militia groups in Iraq. Top Pentagon leaders are also being more direct in declaring that the Iranian government, including President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, is aware of the shipments. Even though the criticism of Iran has been increasing lately, officials had recently acknowledged they weren't sure whether Iranian weapons found in Iraq were leftovers. But this new discovery apparently gives officials the confidence to claim that Iran continues to ship weapons, including explosively formed penetrators, to Shiite militants.

*USAT* highlights that the problems with air traffic controllers in Dallas revealed yesterday amounted to the [second time in as many months](#) that "federal whistle-blowers raised safety concerns at the FAA." Agency officials had promised in 2005 to crack down on reporting errors in Dallas, but the problems persisted for several years. Although none of the errors resulted in a crash, misreporting is serious business because it can prevent the FAA from tracking patterns and improving overall safety at airports.

The *NYT* off-leads an interesting look at how experts in aviation say [runway collisions](#) are the aspect of airline safety that worries them the most. Even though nervous fliers probably think they're safe when they're on the ground, the chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board says that exactly the opposite is true. "To me, this is the most dangerous aspect of flying," he

said. Although existing technology could help avoid most of the risk, the FAA has been slow in requiring that it be implemented. Here's a scary thought: "If you've got a G.P.S. in your car, you have infinitely more detailed information about where you are than in the cockpit of an airplane on the ground," a former president of the Air Line Pilots Association said.

The *NYT* fronts, and everybody mentions, news that Iraq's main Sunni political bloc announced that it will [return to the government](#) after a boycott that has been in place since August. Although the finishing touches on the deal are still being worked out, the move would be a clear victory for Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki as he continues to wage war against Shiite militias. "The reconciliation has proved a success," Maliki said. But the *LAT* [points out](#) that followers of cleric Muqtada Sadr said they have no plans to return to the government.

The *LAT* fronts a look at how Sen. Barack Obama is the "[new star](#)" of several Republican ads. Besides giving a preview of what Republicans might focus on in the general election if he's the nominee, the ads are particularly significant because they're coming out at a time when Democratic leaders are trying to figure out whether Obama "could be vulnerable to being cast as too far out of the mainstream." Meanwhile, in the *WP*'s op-ed page, [Geoff Garin](#), a strategist for Sen. Hillary Clinton's campaign, says the former first lady has been held to a different standard than Obama. Although Clinton has often been accused of being too negative, it's Obama's campaign that "has made an unprecedented assault on her character—not her positions, but her character—saying one thing about raising the tone of political discourse but acting quite differently in its treatment of Clinton."

The *NYT* and *WP* go inside with the top U.S. envoy to Africa saying that Zimbabwe's opposition leader, Morgan Tsvangirai, was the "[clear victor](#)" of the country's election and President Robert Mugabe should step down. "This is a government rejecting the will of the people," the assistant secretary of state for African affairs said. "If they had voted for Mugabe, the results would already have been announced. Everyone knows what time it is."

The *LAT* and *NYT* note that actor Wesley Snipes was sentenced to three years in prison for failing to file tax returns for [three years](#). The judge ignored dozens of letters, including from the likes of Woody Harrelson and Denzel Washington, and handed the maximum penalty to the star of the *Blade* trilogy. In what [the NYT calls](#) the "most prominent tax prosecution since the billionaire hotelier Leona Helmsley was convicted of tax fraud in 1989," Snipes has to pay up to \$17 million in back taxes, not including penalties and interest.

## today's papers

### Mystic Nuclear Revelations

By Daniel Politi

Thursday, April 24, 2008, at 6:11 AM ET

The [Washington Post](#) leads with news that lawmakers will see a video today of North Koreans inside the suspected Syrian nuclear reactor site that was [destroyed by Israel last September](#). This video is apparently what convinced Israel and the White House that Syria was receiving help from North Korea to build a nuclear reactor, particularly because of its striking design similarities to the reactor at Yongbyon. [USA Today](#) leads with a look at how approximately 60,000 federal contractors owe almost \$8 billion [in back taxes](#). "Lack of communication between agencies lets one arm of the government pay contractors money while another arm is trying to collect taxes from them," says *USAT*. Lawmakers are angry and are moving to do something about the problem. A regulation that took effect this week requires contractors to reveal if they owe any taxes, and a bill that's pending in the Senate would prohibit companies that owe taxes from getting contracts.

The [New York Times](#), the [Los Angeles Times](#), and the *Wall Street Journal's* world-wide newsbox all lead with looks at the continuing Democratic presidential contest after Sen. Hillary Clinton's victory in Pennsylvania. As all eyes turn toward Indiana, the Clinton campaign announced that it received \$10 million in contributions after the Tuesday victory, [reports the WSJ](#). The *NYT* has a double-story lead, one looking at increasing questions of how Sen. Barack Obama's race [might affect the general election](#) and another questioning how much primary results really foreshadow [what will happen in November](#). The *LAT* talks to "dozens" of superdelegates, who seem to accept that the race will continue for [six more weeks](#) but insist that a decision has to be made after the last primary on June 3 and can't wait until the convention, which will take place in late August.

Israel apparently decided to show the Bush administration the video from inside the Syrian facility after U.S. officials openly expressed skepticism that North Korea was [helping to build a nuclear reactor](#). Syria vigorously denies the claim. "If they show a video, remember that the U.S. went to the U.N. Security Council and displayed evidence and images about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq," the Syrian ambassador said. Others are also skeptical, particularly because officials will tell lawmakers that "there was no uranium for the reactor and no indication of fuel capability," which has led experts to wonder whether this was really part of a Syrian nuclear weapons program. Also, there is no evidence that Syria has tried to rebuild after the bombing, so the inevitable question is: Why now?

The *NYT*, which reeferes the story, notes the whole thing is strange considering that the White House has so far refused to talk about the bombing. "It is not clear what has changed, apart



from the politics of the moment," [says the NYT](#). Some think it might force the North Koreans to confess. But there are "widespread suspicions, especially in the State Department," that the administration's hawks—led by Vice President Cheney—pushed for the release of the information in order to derail an impending deal with North Korea, which many say is too soft on Pyongyang. As an alternate theory, [some officials tell the WP](#) that "the CIA's hand was forced" because lawmakers had threatened to cut funds if they weren't kept in the loop.

The *NYT*'s [Adam Nagourney](#) acknowledges that "the role of race is difficult to disentangle from the other strands of the political debate surrounding" the senator from Illinois, including his "values, elitism, ideology, and experience." But it seems clear that race is at least playing some sort of factor in a key part of the electorate, and that is increasingly worrying Democrats. Although Obama says he's made inroads with white, blue-collar voters, the *Post* [points out](#) that "exit polls dispute that." Not only did he lose white voters without college degrees in Pennsylvania by pretty much the same margin as in Ohio, he even lost ground with white Roman Catholics, who make up an important constituency in several key states.

Clinton's victory in Pennsylvania allowed her to continue making the argument that she's winning the states that are essential to a Democratic victory in November. But the *NYT* says that just because she's winning the states in the primary [doesn't mean](#) Obama can't also win them in November. For its part, Obama's camp contends that the senator from Illinois could put other states in play that have traditionally leaned Republican. Ultimately, political analysts seem to agree that "state primary results do not necessarily translate into general election victories," and most of those who voted for Clinton would likely pull the lever for Obama in November.

Despite the spike in donations, the former first lady still expects to be vastly outspent in Indiana, notes the *WSJ*. According to the Associated Press, Clinton still trails Obama in the national delegate count by 131. In terms of the popular vote, "the gap both narrows and widens" depending on how it's counted, [notes the WSJ](#). Traditional counts put Obama ahead in the popular vote, but if the results from Michigan and Florida are included, then Clinton has a narrow lead.

In a *WSJ* op-ed piece, Karl Rove says that although Obama is still clearly the favorite, the last few weeks have [weakened him as a candidate](#). "His appeals are based on two aspirational pledges he is increasingly less credible in making," Rove writes. There's little evidence that Obama "demonstrated bipartisanship" in any important issues as a senator, and he has also "not provided leadership on any major legislative battle."

The *NYT*, *WP*, and *LAT* front news that Gen. David Petraeus, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, is now the Bush administration's nominee to lead military forces in the Middle East and Central

Asia as [head of Central Command](#). At the same time, Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno was nominated to take over for Petraeus in Iraq. Everyone points out that with these nominations, President Bush is ensuring that two commanders who have been key to his strategy in Iraq continue in influential roles long after he leaves the White House. The *NYT* and *WSJ* emphasize that the move could very well signal that the Pentagon is ready to overhaul its [Afghanistan mission](#) and implement the same sort of counterinsurgency tactics that have been used in Iraq. The *LAT* notes up high that Petraeus has often been critical of [Iran's interference in Iraq](#), "making his appointment a signal of heightened U.S. attention to Tehran."

Grocery prices are increasing, and even a casual reader of news probably knows that food shortages have led to riots around the world. But lawmakers in Washington are covering their ears, closing their eyes, and pretending that everything is the same, [notes the NYT](#). Although American farmers are making record incomes and losing sleep over the futures markets, Congress is getting ready to pass the typical farm bill that has billions in the same old subsidies. "It really is astounding," said Rep. Ron Kind, D-Wis. "It's as if this farm bill is being negotiated in a vacuum."

The *WP* notes that the latest royal mini-scandal in England involves Prince William, who has been busy traveling around in a Royal Air Force [Chinook helicopter](#) as if it were his new ride. He landed the helicopter near his girlfriend's home ("a majestic use of military aircraft as a flirtation device") and picked up his brother to fly to a bachelor party, among other questionable uses of taxpayer resources. There's been the usual grumbling about privilege, but others are decidedly more forgiving of the prince: "If William can't run around and act like, 'I'm going to be king,' then who can?"

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## today's papers

### The Show Must Go On

By Daniel Politi

Wednesday, April 23, 2008, at 6:25 AM ET

All the papers lead with Sen. Hillary Clinton's decisive win in the Pennsylvania primary. With nearly all the votes counted, Clinton led Sen. Barack Obama by 10 percentage points. There seems to be a consensus that this margin of victory is exactly within the range of what Clinton needed to stay in the race but fell short of a landslide that could have really changed the shape of the contest. The *Los Angeles Times* reports that out of the 158 delegates that [could have been won yesterday](#), Clinton got at least 66, Obama gained 57, and the rest still have to be awarded. After weeks of intense campaigning, it's clear that interest in the race remains high, and the *Washington Post* points out that more



than 2 million Democrats [voted yesterday](#), which is "nearly triple the number who turned out in the past two presidential primaries in the state."

Even though it seems nearly impossible for Clinton to catch up to Obama as far as the pledged delegates are concerned, [her victory](#) "does reinforce questions she has raised about whether the Illinois senator can appeal to white working-class voters and carry the big industrial states," says [USA Today](#). The [New York Times](#) points out that Clinton "used the words 'fight,' 'fighter' and 'fighting' repeatedly" [in her victory speech](#) "to convey that she had the resolve and confidence to stay in the race." But there's already been plenty of fighting, and if there's one conclusion everyone can agree on, it is that the long campaign in Pennsylvania "left both candidates bloody," as the [Wall Street Journal](#) [puts it](#).

Clinton won in Pennsylvania by relying on her base of whites, women, older voters, and the less affluent, which allows her to continue questioning whether Obama can win with voters who have always been essential for Democrats. "Considering his financial advantage, the question ought to be, why can't he close the deal?" [Clinton asked yesterday](#). While it's true that Obama didn't manage to make many inroads among white, working-class voters despite the fact that he vastly outspent Clinton in advertising, the [LAT](#) says it's significant that he didn't [lose support](#) among that group "even after navigating some of the worst weeks of the campaign so far." And Clinton still clearly faces an uphill battle if she hopes to convince superdelegates that Obama is a flawed candidate. The [Post's Dan Balz](#) says that "even some of her most loyal supporters privately expressed doubts last night that she can prevail."

The [NYT](#) points out that Obama seems determined to use his [financial advantage](#) "to overwhelm" Clinton in the next few contests. And Clinton let that be known yesterday to her supporters, telling them that she needed their help. "We can only keep winning if we can keep competing against an opponent who outspends us so massively," she said. Her campaign said she received \$2.5 million in a few hours after Pennsylvania was [called in her favor](#).

All eyes are now on Indiana, which votes on May 6, and each candidate has reason to be hopeful because it has an important blue-collar constituency but also shared media markets with Illinois, which means many Democrats in the state "have known Obama for several years," [says the LAT](#).

Exit polls demonstrated that the deeply negative turn that the campaign took in the past few weeks has hurt both candidates. Most of those who voted for Obama said they don't think Clinton is honest, while Clinton voters had similar [negative feelings](#) about Obama. There are several statistics from exit polls that will undoubtedly lead to much hand-wringing among Democrats. The [WSJ](#) points out that around 25 percent of

Clinton's supporters said they would vote for Sen. John McCain rather than Obama, while 16 percent of Obama's supporters claim to prefer the presumptive Republican nominee to the former first lady. The [NYT](#) notes that exit polls seem to provide "[stark evidence](#)" that Obama's race could really hurt his chances in a general election. A total of 16 percent of whites said race matters, and a mere 54 percent of those voters said they would pull the lever for Obama if he's the nominee.

Obama might also begin to face problems from people who flocked to him because of his positive tone but could get turned off by the increasingly negative nature of the campaign. The [WP](#) points out that in the [last few weeks](#), "the candidate who rocketed to stardom as the embodiment of a new kind of politics -- hopeful, positive and inspiring -- saw his image tarnished in the bruising fight for Pennsylvania." And the negativity will probably intensify in the coming weeks. A Democratic strategist says that Obama's camp is likely to bring up more controversies from Bill Clinton's presidency (cattle futures, anyone?) before Indiana in order to try to close up the race as soon as possible. ([Slate's John Dickerson](#) warns: "For those in the Democratic Party who are worried that the race has gotten too ugly, it looks like it's going to get even uglier.")

As has become the norm, all the papers have quotes from Democrats who just want the contest to end because all this infighting is raising both of the candidates' negative ratings before the real campaign against McCain even begins. "Anybody who says past this point that this is good for the party or good for the nominee is a fool," a Democratic strategist [tells the LAT](#). Guess that means the [WSJ's Gerald Seib](#) is a fool, then, because he argues exactly that point today. "Toughness and resilience are important attributes, and that is what a long campaign instills in a candidate," Seib writes.

In other news, the [LAT](#) says Sunni militants were responsible for several attacks across Iraq that [killed 22 people](#). Most significantly, a suicide truck bomb killed two U.S. Marines and 10 Iraqis in Anbar province, and al-Qaida in Iraq claimed responsibility. "The killings underscored the threat still posed by Sunni insurgent groups," [notes the WP](#).

The [WP](#) fronts the World Food Program director calling the constant rise in food prices a "[silent tsunami](#)" that could have devastating effects around the world. There's not much new here, except that the WFP gave figures that illustrate the challenges of trying to keep up with the seemingly nonstop inflation in food prices. Two months ago, the WFP said it needed \$500 million to fill its "food gap," but now that number has increased to \$755 million.

The [NYT](#) fronts a look at how Rupert Murdoch is making moves to increase his power over the [New York media market](#). For the first time since buying the [WSJ](#), Murdoch will have the chance to appoint the top editor at the paper since Marcus Brauchli

resigned yesterday. In addition, the mogul is also hoping to close a deal to buy the Long Island-based *Newsday* for \$580 million. Murdoch not only hopes to gain control over a big chunk of the New York tabloid market, he also hopes the move will allow him to consolidate operations with the *New York Post*, which currently loses about \$50 million a year.

During oral arguments in the Supreme Court case about the so-called "Millionaires' Amendment," which sets special rules for candidates running against wealthy opponents, a lawyer had a laugh at the expense of a ghost from [earlier primaries](#). "And certainly the public was not particularly interested in Mitt Romney, who spent a significant amount of money on his own behalf, and many other spectacular flameouts," the lawyer said. There was laughter, but the chief justice would have none of it: "I'm not sure we need characterizations of the political candidates ... in this forum."

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## today's papers The Drug Wars

By Daniel Politi

Tuesday, April 22, 2008, at 6:15 AM ET

The *New York Times* leads with the Food and Drug Administration announcing that contaminated heparin from 12 Chinese companies has been found in 11 countries and is linked to [81 deaths in the United States](#). But Chinese Embassy officials strongly disputed the claims, saying that the man-made contaminant can't be the real cause of the deaths and suggested the problem may have originated in the United States. *USA Today* leads with Pentagon records showing that the Army has increased the use of [involuntary extensions](#) to maintain troop levels despite the fact that Defense Secretary Robert Gates said last year that they should be kept to a minimum. The number of soldiers affected has increased 43 percent since May, to a total of 12,235 in March.

The *Washington Post* leads with the last day of campaigning before [Pennsylvania voters head to the polls today](#). Sen. Hillary Clinton unveiled a new ad, and Barack Obama's campaign worked hard to manage expectations, saying that the former first lady is clearly the favorite to win their first contest in six weeks. The *Wall Street Journal* leads its world-wide newsbox with a look at how the Democratic contenders will each leave Pennsylvania with very different balance sheets. While Clinton is in debt, Obama has more than \$40 million [available](#). The *Los Angeles Times* leads with new record prices for both [oil and gasoline](#). The average price of gas nationwide passed the \$3.50 mark, and the price of crude oil reached \$117.48 a barrel. Many predict that it won't be long before gasoline costs more than \$4 a

gallon in many parts of the country and a barrel of oil reaches \$125.

Before the FDA made its announcement about Heparin, the Chinese government began what the *WSJ* characterizes as a "pushback" [against the conclusions](#). At a press conference, Chinese officials said they want to look into whether the problem was caused in the end stage of the production process. The FDA disputes the Chinese assertion that severe adverse reactions have not been observed [in any other countries](#), although it's unclear whether contaminated heparin is linked to deaths anywhere else.

The *NYT* and *WSJ* highlight how this is the latest example of the growing rift between the United States and China over [safety issues](#). Meanwhile, it's becoming clearer just how little oversight there is of imported products. A new government audit says the FDA would have to invest an additional \$56 million next year simply to begin full inspections of foreign plants. At the current pace, "the F.D.A. would need at least 27 years to inspect every foreign medical device plant that exports to the United States, 13 years to check every foreign drug plant and 1,900 years to examine every foreign food plant," reports the *NYT*.

Clinton's new ad invokes images of Pearl Harbor and Osama Bin Laden to question whether Obama is [ready to be president](#). The ad never mentions Obama by name, but the message is clear: "Who do you think has what it takes?" Obama's camp quickly responded with an ad of its own: "Who in times of challenge will unite us—not use fear and calculation to divide us?"

Although Obama has spent almost twice as much on TV ads in Pennsylvania, his campaign is making it clear that he doesn't expect to win today. But, of course, as has been the case during several of these contests, winning isn't only about winning. The *LAT* says Clinton [needs to win](#) by at least 10 percentage points, but the *Post* notes that some think that as long as she wins by more than five points it would mark "a respectable victory," considering how much money Obama has spent on ads. Democrats agree that the key factor today will be to see whether Obama has been able to make significant gains with blue-collar voters.

In a Page One analysis, the *WSJ* says there are [four groups of voters](#) that "stand out as the key pieces" of the electoral puzzle: "working-class males, young people, rural and small-town Americans and Hispanics." To some degree, all of these groups will be on display in Pennsylvania, which is why today's vote will be critically important for Clinton if she hopes to have any chance of ultimately prevailing against Obama.

One area in which Clinton remains highly vulnerable is money. In a Page One story, the *WSJ* says her lack of money could be what ultimately kills her chance to [keep up with Obama](#) during the next few contests. This lack of money will be particularly

felt in Indiana, which votes May 6. Polls show a tight contest, and Obama has said it "may end up being the tiebreaker."

But before the candidates can start thinking about Indiana, there's still the small matter of Pennsylvania. The *WSJ* says that if by any chance Obama [wins today](#), Clinton "will likely have to drop out." On the flip side, even if Clinton wins by a large margin, she still won't pick up enough delegates to make a significant dent in Obama's lead. But it could lead superdelegates to question Obama's prospects and hold off any more endorsements until the next set of primaries.

Meanwhile, both the *WP* and *NYT* point out that it's looking less and less likely that Obama and Clinton will join forces. The prospect was always far-fetched, but as time goes on and [tensions continue to rise](#), some Democratic insiders are convinced that it would simply be a [bad idea](#).

In other news, the *WP* fronts a look at a new study that says life expectancy for women in nearly 1,000 counties is [shorter now than what it was in the 1980s](#). The women who saw the sharpest drops in their life spans live mainly in the Deep South and Appalachia. Researchers say lung cancer, diabetes, and obesity have contributed to this "distinctly American" trend.

In a blunt piece inside, the *WSJ* says that the [tax cuts](#) Sen. John McCain is vowing to push through as president "would either cause the federal deficit to explode or would require unprecedented spending cuts." He has proposed a total of more than \$650 billion in tax cuts a year that would mostly benefit "corporations and upper-income families." Details are scarce, but he has promised deep cuts would equal \$160 billion a year, which was "the total budget in 2007 for the departments of Education, Energy, Homeland Security, Justice and State." In other McCain-related news, the *LAT* points out that when the senator released his tax return last week, he disclosed that he received a tax-exempt \$58,358 for what his staff called a ["disability pension"](#) from the Navy because of "his limited body movements due to injuries as a POW."

As Democrats continue to fight over who will get a chance to sit in the Oval Office, *USAT* notes that the current occupant of the White House now has "the highest disapproval rating" that has ever been recorded in the Gallup Poll's [70-year history](#). In a weekend poll, 69 percent said they disapprove of President Bush.

In an apparent attempt to boost his numbers using his old standby charm and self-deprecating attitude, Bush made an appearance on a [popular NBC show yesterday](#). "I'm thrilled to be on *Deal or No Deal* with you tonight," Bush said. "Come to think of it, I'm thrilled to be anywhere with high ratings these days."

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## today's papers

### Bring 'Em Back On

By Ryan Grim

Monday, April 21, 2008, at 6:06 AM ET

The [New York Times](#) and [Washington Post](#) lead with nearly identical headlines, reporting that Barack Obama has sharpened his tone on the eve of the Pennsylvania primary. The [Los Angeles Times](#) goes with a study showing that the workforce lacks the education and training needed to replace the retiring boomer generation. [USA Today](#) leads with nations' unwillingness to meet previous troop commitments in Afghanistan. The [Wall Street Journal](#) puts the pope's visit to Ground Zero atop its world-wide news box, fronting two stories on the Democratic primary.

Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, D-N.Y., has been asking Democrats to take a fresh look at Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., in the wake of what she considers to be her superior debate performance. "It's no wonder my opponent has been so negative these last few days of this campaign," she said, "because I think you saw the difference between us."

The *Post* notes that Obama's increasingly negative rhetoric is a departure from his practice of coasting into a primary vote with a positive message, nervous about making Clinton seem too sympathetic. After Clinton's many comebacks, he seems to be dismissing that fear. The last few days, Obama has painted Clinton as a [compromised Washington insider](#) (*Times*) and a [practitioner of old-style, special-interest politics](#) (*Post*)—while making apologies for getting rough. "Look, our campaign's not perfect," he said. "There've been times where, you know, if you get elbowed enough, eventually you start elbowing back."

The [Wall Street Journal fronts speculation that](#), immediately following the primaries, "influential Democrats—led by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi—plan to push the last uncommitted party leaders to endorse a candidate, in hopes of preventing a fight at the August presidential convention, party insiders say. ... That's when Mrs. Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, Democratic Party chairman Howard Dean and their allies will start rallying superdelegates to decide the contest in favor of the leading candidate, Democrats say." *Leading candidate* has become a euphemism for Obama, given his essentially insurmountable lead.

Reading between the story's lines, it's possible to wager a guess at the identity of the insider sources. Donna Brazile, Al Gore's 2000 campaign manager, is quoted in the piece saying a group around Clinton doesn't "care about the party" and that after the last primary "we'll all talk to each other. I know I'll reach out to

some key people, including my ex-boss." Dean, too, was interviewed for the story, as were Pelosi aides.

The *Journal* runs its write-up of the pope's [visit on Page 3](#), highlighting an unexpected shyness and compassion from the church leader. His visit raised hopes that he will follow up by removing the statute of limitations that has so far protected some priests who sexually abused children. He mentioned the scandal on every day of his trip. A photo of the pope is splashed across the [front of the Times](#).

The *Post* [fronts a five-click feature](#) about the growing use of relatives' DNA in the investigation of crimes. Law enforcement officials claim that testing a suspect's relatives' DNA can narrow a search—as it did with the BTK serial killer, whose daughter's DNA was tested and found nearly to match that found at crime scenes. Privacy advocates are unenthusiastic about the broadening scope, noting that the tool will be used primarily on DNA already in the government's possession—meaning that minority suspects will be overly affected.

A recent NATO summit, which led to the pledge by other nations of some 7,000 to 8,000 additional troops for Afghanistan, was more talk than action, [USAT reports](#). Only a few thousand of those have been delivered, and others appear to be on their way home, with Poland set to remove 900 troops in the fall and Georgia 2,000 next year. One security expert tells the paper that "what the NATO summit showed is that the United States is not going to be able to count on its NATO allies to fill the gap in Afghanistan."

[The LAT leads with a study](#) showing a crisis in workforce training and education, just as the boomer generation is set to retire. Citing a new study based largely on U.S. Census data, the paper notes that "60% of [Los Angeles County's] immigrant workers struggle with English and one-third lack high school diplomas." Those immigrants now account for roughly half of all workers and are projected to account for nearly all of the growth over the next few decades.

"Right now we're headed toward becoming a Third World city. But we can change that," says Ernesto Cortes Jr., Southwest regional director of the Industrial Areas Foundation, which the *Times* says is something called "a leadership development organization."

[WSJ fronts a look](#) at Obama's rise through Illinois politics.

The *NYT* fronts a [piece on "Mugabe's Tsunami"](#), as it's being called in South Africa. A thousand Zimbabweans a day are estimated to be fleeing the violence following President Robert Mugabe's apparent electoral loss, coupled with a refusal to cede power. He has prevented results from being released as Mugabe-supporting gangs beat and torture opposition supporters.

[Latin America's political movement](#) leftward continued, with the landslide election of a man dubbed the "Bishop of the poor" in Paraguay.

[WSJ fronts fears that another](#) shoe may drop in the spreading lending crisis, as small banks begin to take the hits that big banks have absorbed. "Regulators are bracing for a surge in bank failures, especially among smaller lenders that often lack the diversification to absorb steep losses in one area. Those banks are also less appealing to the sovereign wealth funds and other big investors that have poured billions into larger banks."

PETA is offering a million-dollar prize to a researcher who finds [commercially viable fake meat](#), and Danica Patrick became the first woman to [win an Indy car race](#).

**Bring 'em on, again ...** *USAT* and *WSJ* tease Rice's Sunday trip to Iraq on the front; [she mocked](#) cleric Muqtada Sadr as a "coward." Now, TP isn't schooled in the art of diplomacy, but ...

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## today's papers

### Onward, T.V. Soldiers

By David Sessions

Sunday, April 20, 2008, at 5:33 AM ET

The *New York Times* leads with a [7,500-word exposé](#) of the Pentagon "message machine," a concerted effort by the Department of Defense to spread the Bush administration's Iraq talking points by briefing supposedly independent retired commanders for network and cable television appearances. The *Los Angeles Times* leads with California school districts' [cries to parents](#) for funding in the face of sweeping budget cuts. Potential layoff notices have been handed to 20,000 teachers, librarians, and nurses, as districts ask for as much as \$400 a year from each student's family. The *Washington Post* leads with the growing energy consumption of the District of Columbia, which fuels the coal mining that is devouring the once-green landscape of nearby West Virginia. The [largely unenlightening piece](#) shows that D.C.'s energy consumption is on the rise but fails to highlight much of a conflict beyond the concerns of isolated environmentalists and select West Virginians. More of the state's residents, it seems, see their coal-rich environment as a "gift from God."

The *NYT* successfully sued the Department of Defense to gain access to thousands of e-mails and internal documents relating to its posse of military T.V. commentators. The 8,000 pages of information "reveal a symbiotic relationship where the usual dividing lines between government and journalism have been obliterated." These "military experts" often communicated with the Pentagon to receive the latest agenda before going on



camera, and some used the inside information to assist private companies in obtaining military contracts. More unfortunately, "members of this group have echoed administration talking points, sometimes even when they suspected the information was false or inflated. Some analysts acknowledged they suppressed doubts because they feared jeopardizing their access." Several of the purported military experts express regret over their actions, while the Pentagon defends the operation as a genuine effort to inform the American people. The networks, with the sole exception of CNN, refused to comment.

The *Times* also fronts two war stories—first, requests [by American commanders in Pakistan](#) for expanded attacks on indigenous radicals in the country's tribal regions. The requests have been "rebuffed for now" amid fear that such attacks would upset delicate negotiations between Pakistan's new government and radical groups. On the Iraq front, Iraqi soldiers took control of the [final strongholds of cleric Muqtada al-Sadr](#) in Basra, prompting Iran's Baghdad ambassador to publicly "endorse" the Iraqi army's military operation in the region. The victory and ensuing calm also prompted violent, desperate words from al-Sadr, who accused his opponents of using the "politics of Saddam."

The *WP* tops its A1 with a [study](#) of Sen. John McCain's "volcanic temper," which the presumptive Republican presidential nominee explains alternately as a lifelong character flaw and as the fuel of his fire for political reform. The unflattering piece charts the infamous temper from its early days on the playgrounds of the many schools McCain attended as a child to the Senate chambers, where it often showers McCain's opponents with denigrating expletives. Like [this Post](#) piece, a string of "McCain stories" —in which the grievances and grudges of past colleagues are aired—forms the bulk of the story. Those who have born the brunt of McCain's fury in the past are split on how the temper might affect his presidential performance—some are now his supporters while others see his short fuse as a strong disqualifier for the Oval Office.

In a front-page, left-column story, the *NYT* airs the inner dialogue of Sen. Hillary Clinton's campaign about the [erosion of support for Mrs. Clinton](#) among past friends and colleagues. The perceptive piece notes that some Democrats' decisions to defect have been politically expedient, but the erosion is also "a reckoning of whether the Clintons, on balance, have been good or bad for the party." But what some see as disloyalty is, for others, a "well-deserved comeuppance," a reaction to the Clintons' widely perceived one-way loyalty street. Former South Dakota Sen. Tom Daschle chalks it all up to "Clinton fatigue," while others like Minnesota superdelegate Nancy Larson still like the Clintons too much to explain their reasons for endorsing Sen. Barack Obama.

The *LAT* front page reports that [Mexico is feeling U.S. pain](#), as economic slowdown has stanchd the flow of income from

illegal immigrants back to their relatives south of the border. The number crossing into the U.S. this spring might be as low as half the usual rate. "The U.S. housing downturn has dried up much of the building-related labor market, and a striking number of workers here say that, for now, they are unwilling to accept the physical and legal risks and fast-rising smugglers' fees to reach an iffy job situation on the U.S. side," the *Times* reports.

After an ever-so-brief reprieve, Facebook philosophizing is back, [this time](#) in the *WP* Style section. The piece expends several thousand words attempting to define "true" friends amid the sea of new, miscellaneous associations we now call "friendships." What we mostly get, however, is perspectives from the token Facebook-story characters (the proficient college student, the cliquish high schooler, the late-coming adult user) and reiterations of the tired Facebook quandaries (to accept or not to accept?). And of course, there's an avalanche of new metaphors for social networking ("internet cocktail party" and "digital eavesdropping," for example).

Much more worth a look is [an op-ed](#) in the *LAT* that provides evolutionary defenses for the Biblical admonition to "turn the other cheek." Or on the lighter side, an amusing essay in the *WP* magazine section explores the office caste system encapsulated in an [e-mail's recipient fields](#).

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## today's papers

### Stop Loss

By Barron YoungSmith

Saturday, April 19, 2008, at 6:06 AM ET

The *New York Times* leads with [news](#) that the Catholic Church may change some rules governing its approach to sexual abuse cases. The *Los Angeles Times* lead [says](#) the worst of the credit crisis may be over--then warns that actually it probably isn't. The *Washington Post* lead [says](#) Franklin Raines, a former Fannie Mae exec accused of earnings manipulation, has reached a \$24.7 million settlement with the government. The *Wall Street Journal* tops its world-wide newsbox with the Pope's [human rights speech](#) at the UN.

Cardinal William Levada, who handles sex abuse cases for the Vatican, surprised reporters at a *Time* luncheon when he casually mentioned that the Church may alter relevant canon law. The Church will likely tweak the statute of limitations, which is now so short that it discourages victims abused at a young age from coming forward.

The Dow is at a 3 month high after Citigroup posted less-than-feared quarterly losses--having shed a reassuring amount of bad debt and excess junior analysts. (The *NYT* fronts a [piece](#) on the



human cost of these layoffs--hundreds of Ivy League grads lost their new jobs at Bear Stearns; and many are being asked to sign contracts saying they won't sue.) However, the *LAT* warns, the rally might be a mirage presaging more economic misery.

Details of the case against Franklin D. Raines are scarce, and this settlement will ensure they stay that way. But the *WP* does have a detailed breakdown on how Raines will pay, including a return of \$15.6 million in currently-worthless stock options, and \$2 million covered by a Fannie Mae insurance policy.

There are three other Pope stories today and the papers all deal with them differently, splitting and recombining elements like Lego blocks:

First, the Pope held a surprise private meeting with a handful of abuse victims--the first such meeting in history. The *NYT* [stuffs](#) this meeting, preferring to focus on its unexpected scoop, while the *WP* fronts its [moving account](#) of the event as part of a piece on Catholic ambivalence about the Pope's approach to abuse.

Second, the ambivalence. Catholics are glad the Pope is taking the Church sex scandals seriously. But some fear there won't be real change until he disciplines the bishops who covered for abusive priests. The *WP* fronts this piece, as discussed above; while the *NYT* stuffs it inside its canon law lead.

Third, the Pope [spoke](#) on human rights and science ethics at the UN, and visited a synagogue on the Upper East Side (why not drop by the Strand or catch a show while he's at it?)--a story the *WSJ* reefs and the other papers stuff.

The *NYT* [fronts](#) an "uproar" caused by a Chinese arms shipment to Zimbabwean dictator Robert Mugabe. The freighter docked in South Africa, prompting moral outrage, protests, and legal challenges--further calling into question China and South Africa's role in Zimbabwe's election.

The *LAT* [fronts](#), the *WSJ* [reefs](#), and the *WP* and *NYT* stuff the release of Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz.'s tax returns, yet the McCain campaign refused to release his wife's. Take away: "The disclosures from 2006 and 2007 indicate that he spent most of his own income, suggesting that Cindy McCain funds their lifestyle."

The *LAT* fronts a [look](#) at how the immigration battle transformed Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff from the nation's anti-terrorism boss into America's "border czar," where his duties include managing construction of the border fence.

A *WP* front [says](#) the U.S. Olympic Team won't aim for a certain amount of medals this year, citing previous doping scandals. The U.S. team doing all it can just to ensure the Americans come off as clean and well-behaved.

An *LAT* front [says](#) China is also trying to be on good behavior. Having fanned nationalism to redirect questions about Tibet, China's internet police are now deleting all references to protests against the West.

The *WP* goes up top with a [look](#) inside U.S.-trained Afghan special ops teams, a bright spot in NATO's Afghanistan operation. The Afghans are now standing in for U.S. soldiers in many of situations, and sometimes doing a better job.

The *NYT* fronts a [look](#) at Brazil's crackdown on illegal logging, dubbed Operation Arc of Fire. Not surprisingly, local officials are pushing back, decrying the "militaristic approach to saving trees."

The *NYT* fronts [news](#) that American Airlines is blaming the FAA for its recent troubles--saying the FAA has been erratic and unclear about airworthiness guidelines. The FAA disagrees.

All the papers go inside with a 5.2 magnitude [earthquake](#) that shook Chicago and Cincinnati.

The *WSJ* [reefers](#), and the other papers stuff Obama endorsements from former Senators Sam Nunn and David Boren, as well as former Labor Secretary Robert Reich.

The *NYT* goes inside with a [GAO ruling](#) that the Bush administration violated federal law when it tried to stop states from expanding the popular S-CHIP program, which provides health care to children.

**Is the fairy tale over?** Inside, the *NYT* [reports](#) on rumors that President Putin is divorcing his loyal wife, Ludmyla, for a 24-year old Olympic gymnast. When asked about the rumor, Putin replied tartly. *Moskovsky Korrespondent*, the paper that originally reported on the issue, was immediately "suspended for financial reasons."

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## video

### Nepal's Maoists

A Magnum photo essay.

Monday, April 21, 2008, at 6:32 PM ET

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## war stories

### Revolving Doors

What the shifting of generals bodes for Afghanistan and Iraq.

By Fred Kaplan  
Thursday, April 24, 2008, at 4:03 PM ET

Gen. David Petraeus' promotion—from commander of multinational forces in Iraq to the head of U.S. Central Command, encompassing American military missions in all of central and south Asia, including Iraq and Afghanistan—is by now old news, though it was [announced](#) only on Wednesday. So is the elevation of Petraeus' deputy, Gen. Raymond Odierno, to take his place in Baghdad.

But in some ways, the more intriguing—and perhaps significant—announcement was the move to pin a fourth star on Lt. Gen. Peter Chiarelli's shoulders and make him the Army's vice chief of staff.

Chiarelli has spent the last year and a half as Secretary of Defense Robert Gates' senior military assistant. The two met in August 2006, when Gates was a member of the Iraq Study Group (also known as the Baker-Hamilton commission), and Chiarelli, as the U.S. corps commander in Iraq, briefed the panelists during their fact-finding trip to the war zone.

More to the point, Chiarelli is widely known as one of the Army's smartest, most creative senior officers. Many of Gates' boldest speeches and actions can be traced to Chiarelli. For instance, on several occasions, [Gates has said](#) that future wars are likely to be "asymmetrical" conflicts waged against insurgents or terrorists, not high-intensity, head-on set pieces against foes of comparable strength—more like Iraq or Afghanistan, not World War II or Korea. Therefore, Gates concludes, the military—especially the Army—must change its doctrine, training, promotion policies, and weapons-procurement plans to meet these new challenges.

This notion comes straight out of an article that Chiarelli wrote just last summer for [Military Review](#) called "Learning From Our Modern Wars." (An [earlier article](#) that he wrote for the same magazine, in 2005, served as a template for the Army's field manual on counterinsurgency that Petraeus supervised a year later.)

In the brief time that Gates has been defense secretary, the Army's top generals and their assistants—most of whom rose through the ranks as tank or infantry officers geared to fight against Soviet tanks on the plains of Europe—have [resisted](#) these sorts of reforms.

The Army's current vice chief, Gen. Richard Cody, is a straight-talking officer. But he is the embodiment of the traditional Army—and he's been among the resisters.

When Chiarelli takes over the job, which involves running the Army's day-to-day operations inside the Pentagon, he will be as well-positioned as anybody to maneuver these changes through the system. And since it has a two-year term, often extended to four years, he can keep doing this well after Gates' term is up. If the Army is not too hidebound to change its stripes, the next few years might be the time it undergoes a metamorphosis.

The original personnel plan was to make Odierno vice chief and to send Chiarelli back to Iraq as Petraeus' successor. The switch announced Wednesday suggests a desire for continuity, both in Baghdad and in the Pentagon.

Odierno was commander of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division at the start of the U.S. occupation and was, by all accounts, a disaster—a breathing stereotype of the hard-nosed American officer who breaks down doors, barges through homes, and humiliates suspects, "hearts and minds" be damned. (See Thomas Ricks' [Fiasco](#) for the wrenching lowdown.) However, at some point, Odierno had a road-to-Damascus moment, and by the time he returned to Iraq as Petraeus' deputy, he was a full-fledged adherent to the counterinsurgency doctrine.

Chiarelli is on the same page, too, and he has been for a longer time. But Odierno has been at Petraeus' side more recently, dealing with the same subordinates, the same Iraqis, the same situations. He can assume the helm with no transition. Meanwhile, Chiarelli has a better take on the politics inside the Pentagon—who's doing what and where the levers of power lie.

If the intention—for better or worse—was to stay the course in Iraq and advance reforms in the Pentagon, Odierno seems the right man for the former task and Chiarelli the right man for the latter.

Where does Petraeus fit into this equation? One word: Afghanistan. The Bush administration—and, therefore, the U.S. military—currently has *no* strategy for Afghanistan. Some *talk* a mix of counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, and slam-bam combat, but there is no coherent plan. The hope is that Petraeus will come up with one, while Odierno tries to keep Iraq under wraps.

There is, however, a dilemma. Any smart officer who takes a close look at Afghanistan will conclude that, if he's ordered to stay there and win (or at least not lose), he needs more troops. Like it or not, there's only one place those troops can come from: Iraq.

The reallocation won't happen as long as George W. Bush is president. Bush already made that clear by canning [Adm. William "Fox" Fallon](#), Petraeus' predecessor at Central Command, for publicly advocating just such a shift. (Fallon committed other sins, as well, but this was the main one.)

However, it is quite likely that, whoever the next president is, *some* brigades—beyond the five scheduled to go home this summer—will be pulled out of Iraq. Neither Hillary Clinton nor Barack Obama—who, unlike McCain, explicitly advocate withdrawals—is saying that these troops will come home for good. They're both saying that at least some of them will be shifted to Afghanistan. The hope with this appointment is that Petraeus—maybe—comes up with some ideas on how to use them.

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## war stories

### Gates Celebrates Dissent

The generals quash it.

By Fred Kaplan

Wednesday, April 23, 2008, at 2:04 PM ET

Whoever the next president is, his or her secretary of defense should spend a few hours poring over the speeches of Robert M. Gates. Since he took over the Pentagon nearly a year and a half ago, Gates has delivered a series of trenchant critiques of his department's policies and practices. This past Monday alone, he gave two speeches—at the [Air War College](#) and at [West Point](#)—that urged tomorrow's Air Force and Army officers to overhaul the foundations of their bureaucratic cultures.

But speeches are one thing. It's not at all clear that today's senior officers are listening. They know that, in nine months, Gates will be gone, and they'll still be in power. The trick, they've learned over the years, is to hang tight till the storm passes.

Take, for instance, the case of [Paul Yingling](#), the Army lieutenant colonel who, almost exactly one year ago, published a widely read article in the *Armed Forces Journal* that likened Iraq to Vietnam and blamed both debacles on "a crisis in an entire institution, America's general officer corps," which he accused of lacking "professional character," "moral courage," and "creative intelligence." Yingling was no crank. He was 41, a veteran of both Iraq wars, and at the time the deputy commander of the Army's 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment, the unit that—well before Gen. David Petraeus took charge of U.S. forces in Iraq—brought order to the city of Tal Afar through classic counterinsurgency methods.

Gates didn't mention Yingling by name in his speeches on Monday, but he certainly had him in mind when he said at West Point, "I have been impressed by the way the Army's professional journals allow some of our brightest and most innovative officers to critique—sometimes bluntly—the way the service does business, to include judgments about senior leadership."

He went on, "I encourage you to take on the mantle of fearless, thoughtful, but loyal dissent when the situation calls for it. And, agree with the articles or not, senior officers should embrace such dissent as a healthy dialogue and protect and advance those considerably more junior who are taking on that mantle."

So, what has happened to Yingling in the past year? What lessons can the West Point cadets derive about their own future prospects should they choose to follow in Yingling's footsteps?

Every Army officer I've ever spoken with—junior and senior—read Yingling's article. But, to say the least, the senior officers did not "embrace" it as "healthy dialogue." Nobody stepped up to "protect and advance" him for his boldness. Quite the contrary.

Soon after the article was published, Yingling was put in command of the 1-21 Field Artillery battalion, but that move had been scheduled months before. The real story lay in what happened next. His battalion was assigned not, say, to fighting insurgents but rather to prison-guard detail. Yingling himself has just been redeployed to Iraq, where he will assist in rehabilitating Iraqi detainees. This could be an interesting, potentially important job, but it's hardly in the center of things, and it's the very opposite of a career enhancer.

It is worth noting here that, one week before Gates' appearance at West Point, Secretary of the Army [Pete Geren](#) delivered a similar speech at the George Marshall Awards at Washington and Lee University. "Recently," Geren said at this speech, "Lt. Col. Paul Yingling wrote a piece that appeared in the *Armed Forces Journal* and sparked heated debate throughout the Army—ruffled some feathers—ruffled a lot of feathers. That is a good thing. *We need more, not fewer, Paul Yinglings.*" (Italics added.)

Do Gates and Geren know that Yingling has been assigned to detainee operations? Has either of them asked the Army chief of staff what's going on here—if this is the wisest use of the Army's scarce talent?

In his speech to the Air War College, at Maxwell Air Force Base, Gates urged the young officers to emulate the career of John Boyd, an Air Force colonel and former fighter pilot. As Gates noted, Boyd (who died of cancer in 1997) rewrote the manual for air-to-air combat, helped design the F-16 and F-15 fighter planes, and—above all—devised a theory of warfare (laid out in a six-hour briefing titled "Patterns of Conflict") that influenced significant reforms in Army and Marine Corps combat doctrine—reforms that still resonate today.

Gates described Boyd as "a brilliant, eccentric and stubborn character [who] had to overcome a large measure of bureaucratic resistance and institutional hostility." That understates matters;

Boyd never did "overcome" his many foes. I knew Boyd well when I was a congressional aide in the late 1970s and a newspaper reporter through the '80s, and let me tell you: The Air Force brass *hated* Boyd and worked as hard as they could to dismantle the reforms that he briefly managed to put in motion. (The Marine Corps was the service that adopted his ideas. Gen. Alfred Gray, the Marine commandant during the 1991 Gulf War, explicitly based his ground-war strategy on Boyd's briefing. When Boyd died, the Marine Corps University at Quantico—not the Air War College at Maxwell—begged for his papers.)

In his speech, Gates came back repeatedly to Boyd as "a historical exemplar," even reciting at length a piece of advice that Boyd passed on to many of his colleagues and acolytes:

Boyd would say—and I quote—"One day you will take a fork in the road, and you're going to have to make a decision about which direction you want to go. If you go one way, you can *be somebody*. You will have to make your compromises and ... turn your back on your friends, but you will be a member of the club, and you will get promoted and get good assignments. Or you can go the other way, and you can *do something*, something for your country and for your Air Force and for yourself. ... You may not get promoted, and you may not get good assignments, and you certainly will not be a favorite of your superiors, but you won't have to compromise yourself. ... In life there is often a roll call. That's when you have to make a decision: to be or to do."

Gates went on: "For the kinds of challenges America faces and will face, the armed forces will need principled, creative, reform-minded leaders, men and women who, as Boyd put it, want to do something, not be somebody. An unconventional era of warfare requires unconventional thinkers."

This is a noble sentiment that also happens to be true. But Boyd was an unusual man. Tireless, fanatically principled, and always buoyant, he grew up in poverty, lived very modestly, and was genuinely indifferent to rank, external incentives, or material comfort. Most officers—most *people*—are not like that. This is not a criticism; it's simply a fact. And as long as junior officers see (as Gates put it) "principled, creative, reform-minded leaders" like Paul Yingling assigned to lowly positions, the military will not nourish many more Yinglings or Boyds.

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## war stories

### Shot by Both Sides

Iran is outsmarting us in Iraq.

By Fred Kaplan

Tuesday, April 22, 2008, at 5:07 PM ET

Which is it: Are the Iranians extraordinarily clever, or are we extraordinarily dim? Certainly, when it comes to pursuing our respective interests in Iraq, they seem to be thinking and acting strategically, while we seem not to be.

A fascinating [story](#) in the April 21 *New York Times* by James Glanz and Alissa J. Rubin reveals that in the battle for Basra—the major port city of southern Iraq—the United States and Iran are on the same side. Yet the Bush administration is doing nothing to gain leverage from this convergence.

Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki launched his troop offensive in Basra province last month in an attempt to crush the militia of radical Shiite cleric Muqtada Sadr. President George W. Bush—who backed Maliki's move, first with air power, then with armor and special-operations forces—described Sadr's militia men as Iranian-backed thugs.

He might have been right about "thugs," though several analysts (including [this one](#)) noted at the time that the rival Shiite militia backing Maliki—known as the Badr Organization, whose men fought alongside the Iraqi army—had ties to Iran as well.

It is now clear that the Badr Organization's ties to Iran are not merely as close as Sadr's; they are much closer. In fact, as the *Times* reports, Iran's ambassador to Iraq, Hassan Kazemi Qumi, expressed full support for Maliki's offensive in Basra and denounced Sadr's fighters as "outlaws."

It is reasonable to ask what the hell is going on here. President Bush assisted Maliki's offensive as a campaign against Iranian-backed extremists. Now it turns out the Iranians are backing Maliki.

Much of the confusion is dispelled when you consider that the battle for Basra is not so much a military contest between the Iraqi government and outlaw rebels as a power struggle between rival Shiite mafias.

In this sense, Maliki is joined at the hip to the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, a political party that used to be known as the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq. The Badr Organization is this party's militia. (It is integrating itself with the Iraqi army, but it's unclear whether this means that the militia is becoming more like a national army or that the national army is becoming more like a militia.)



The leaders of SCIRI, now ISCI, are tied to Iran in two ways. First, during Saddam Hussein's reign, they spent many years exiled in Iran. Second, and more to the point, their political agenda—whether by design or coincidence—dovetails with Iran's.

ISCI advocates the creation of a semiautonomous super-region incorporating all nine provinces of oil-rich southern Iraq—a Shiite enclave similar to the Kurdish enclave in Iraq's three northern provinces. Iran's leaders also like this idea because they think that such a large, ethnically homogenous region would give them the best chance to influence and possibly control the southern territories, Iraq's Shiite politics, and, therefore—by dint of the country's Shiite majority—Iraqi politics generally.

Muqtada Sadr, on the other hand, rejects the idea of a super-region. He has grander ambitions to control all of Iraq from a central government—a vaster, more turbulent entity, which the Iranians would have a harder time handling. (They probably wouldn't have such an easy time manipulating a southern super-region, either, but at least they'd have an entry point.)

What may well have prompted last month's offensive is that Sadr's militia, the Mahdi Army, is gaining strength in Basra. As a result, it is widely believed that Sadr's party might win there in this fall's provincial elections—a development that would deal a crushing blow to ISCI, weaken Maliki's standing in Iraq's second-largest city, and, perhaps, put an end to the dream of a southern super-region.

Hence the desire to crush Sadr's gangs in Basra, and thus the base of his political support there, before it's too late.

Maliki managed to pull Bush into the conflict because Sadr vociferously opposes any continued U.S. military presence in Iraq, and—until last year, when he declared a cease-fire—his militiamen have devoted a lot of effort to killing American soldiers. By contrast, ISCI's fighters have not posed a direct threat.

Since the start of the offensive in Basra, Sadr's Mahdi Army has resumed shooting at American soldiers in the Sadr City neighborhood of Baghdad—and, interestingly, in that fight, the Iranians are supporting Sadr.

In other words, we find ourselves lassoed into an armed intra-Shiite power struggle on two fronts—and the Iranians are positioned to benefit from one or both contests, no matter whether the side we're backing wins or loses.

So, again: Are they really good at this game, or are we simply out of our element?

One thing is for sure: It is time to start talking with the Iranians. First, they control too many of the pieces for us not to engage them diplomatically. Second, it turns out that we do have some common interests (for instance, crushing Sadr in Basra). Might it be possible to leverage those interests to induce cooperation, or extract concessions, in other realms where we have differences? Third, Maliki clearly has no qualms about talking with the Iranians when it suits his purposes. Why should we?

Finally, there is so much to discuss with Iran that unless we're at war with each other (and nobody has suggested that we are), it's stupid—unfathomably self-destructive—not to make a serious effort.

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