

# THE JOURNAL

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2025 VOL. 10, NO. 5

Coming on July 4, 2026!! 🇺🇸🇺🇸🇺🇸



*"I Need a Word" – What children find out when they are encouraged to learn. By Lucy Thorp p. 24*

*"Economic-Financial Armageddon is Coming" – A rocky road ahead. By David Dorenzo p.62*

*"The Stuartsboro Judgement" – A Freudian nightmare hidden in Southern Conviviality by J. Dan Vignau p.85*

# AOTCJournal

Welcome to the **Journal of the Aware Ones of the Treasure Coast**, a secular humanist gathering, providing companionship, conversation, support, and good times, within honest and objective atheist, agnostic and freethinking values.

Vol.10, No.5

September/October 2025

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\*\\*- Produced by the TC Secular Writers -\*/\*

[awareonesofthetreasurecoast.com](http://awareonesofthetreasurecoast.com)

# INTRODUCTION

It is eerie to realize that 2025 is more than half over, that this is the fifth issue of the Journal for 2025, that fascism continues to thrive in our beloved country.

A year ago, if I wrote that "if Trump is elected, we would have concentration camps, a gestapo (that looks uncannily like January Six thugs) arresting the enemy de jour to fill those camps, book banning's, history rewriting that 'slavery wasn't such a bad



thing,'" and so much more. Wouldn't I be belittled and abused as being overly hyperbolic?

Unfortunately, it is what it is. I hate being right. And we must deal with this regrettable situation. We must resist as well as we can.

I reluctantly face reality, we Aware Ones are old. None of us can protest

the way we want to. Manning the barricades and such other militant nonesence. But, we can show up. Show up to rallies, wave flags, hold up signs, attend town halls, go to city and county council meetings, boo at the quislings who twist the truth into bigotry. We can say "no". We can say "NO" loudly. We must write about how we feel. That's what the Aware Ones of the Treasure Coast Journal is all about.

Once again I find I have too many choices for the cover art. So many to choose from. Powerful landscapes and vistas of this wonderful land. Clever artwork and insightful cartoons. Photos of people protesting against ICE raiders abducting their neighbors.

Photos of people re-painting the multi-colors of the Pulse night club memorial crosswalk in Orlando after deSantis decreed it should be obliterated. Photos of people trying to see the sights of Washington D.C. with National Guard troops in the background. So many choices of the pathetic bigotry that has manifested itself in our lives. What, oh what should I choose?

Since this is, essentially, the fall issue, I looked for something



appropriate for the time of the season. Something like a fall equinox, or maybe a harvest motif. I went so far as to consider something whimsical, to lighten the burden of facing fascism every day and post secretary of education Linda McMahon's witchy face in honor of Halloween. Oooo-eeeeee-oooo, very scary.

At great personal expense, I acquired a copy of the notorious hand-drawn cartoon-sketch that DJT made for his buddy's (*the Epstein Monster*)

commemorative 50<sup>th</sup> birthday ass-kissing album. It is beautiful with boobs, sentimental quotations and Donny's personal autograph as pubic hair. Nahh, that would be almost as tacky as the White House has become. (*However, see p.17 in "Assholes of the Month" section – ed.*)

I felt I must go with the reality that Trump is bragging about. His version of making America Great (i.e. fucked-up). Hosting an Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) event of brutal and bloody kick-boxing at the White House seems more appropriately sarcastic than anything else. Besides illustrating Trump's class, I

think it would qualify as dark and gloomy enough for Halloween.  
Brave New World!

I am so proud of this issue and the contributions from our members. We are DEI. We have variety, we have equality and we have inclusion. Please enjoy this issue of the Journal of the Aware Ones of the Treasure Coast. Stay angry, stay mad as hell and stay WOKE.



*Virgil*

We continue the process of increasing the distribution of this Journal in the hopes of attracting new members. If you are new to the Aware Ones and would like to know more about us, please visit our website at <http://www.AwareOnesOfTheTreasureCoast.com>.

You are also welcome to join our tables and the fresh air at either Stuart's *Sandsprit Park* 3443 SE Saint Lucie Blvd, or *Flagler Park* (under the Roosevelt Bridge on the 1<sup>st</sup> Friday of the month), where we gather every Friday *around* 11:00 am to share ideas and challenge your mind – masks optional. Members are encouraged to share and spread what is becoming a very interesting magazine. Outside criticism and interesting contributions are welcomed. Everyone is welcome to join us at the Sunday 11 am Zoom meeting.

*If you do not want the journal and wish to have your address removed, please email [vmthorp@outlook.com](mailto:vmthorp@outlook.com) for confirmation.*

## AOTC MEMBERS

Dan Vignau	Ed Zillioux
Marsha Banks	Bob Haskins
Ernie Breud	Barbara (Lange) Longo
Eddie Buitrago	Jim Longo
Ray Duryea	Jerry Shaw
Rick Burkhart	Sandra Burkhart
Roberta Synal	David Dorenzo
Paul Carlos	Lucy Thorp
Gloria Cosgrove	Virgil Thorp
Gale Baker	Linda Webb
Bert Mautz	Betty Tewksbury
Betty Kasoff	Mark Kasoff



# MEETINGS & EVENTS

## Meetings



Friday gatherings: **First Friday of month at Flagler Park** (next to *Hudson's on the River* restaurant across the tracks from the Roosevelt Bridge). All other Fridays, **Summits at Sandsprit** – 11 am gathering in the sun and fresh air of Stuart's Sandsprit Park. BYOB.

Sunday Zoom – 11 am Zoom meeting. Contact Dan Vignau <[vignaujd@comcast.net](mailto:vignaujd@comcast.net)> to be included with the connection codes.



TC Secular Writers – We have returned to Jensen Beach at the *House of Brews* (3311 NW Main Ave, Jensen Beach, FL 34957) on every other Thursday evening at 6:00 pm.

## Events



### September 2025 **National Mushroom Month**

September 1

**Labor Day**

World War II began, Hitler



invaded Poland, 1939

September 2 **VJ Day, WWII**

September 3, 1939: The United Kingdom, France, New Zealand and Australia declare war on Germany after the Invasion of Poland.



Photo: Topical Press Agency, 1939.



September 5 **Aware Ones at Flagler Park, 11 am.**

1972: A Palestinian terrorist group called "Black September" attacks and takes hostage 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympic Games. Two die in the attack and nine die the following day. Photo: (AP)

September 7 – **Aware Ones Zoom 11 am.**

September 8 **Star Trek Day** September 11 – **Writer's Group @ Jensen House of Brews, 6:30 pm.**



**911 Remembrance** World Trade Center, New York City September 11, 2001. Photo: David Surowiecki



September 12 – **Aware Ones at Sandsprit Park 11 am.**

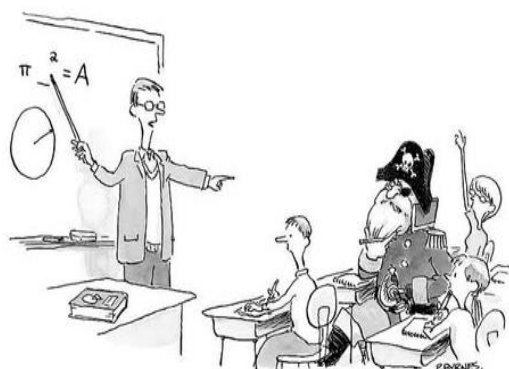
**Jesse Owens** Olympian, born 1913



September 14 – **Aware Ones Zoom 11 am.** **International Crab Fest Day**

September 17

**Constitution Day.** In 1787, the U.S. Constitution was signed and ratified.



*"Pi what squared? Long John,  
you should be able to get this."*

September 19 –

**Aware Ones at Sandsprit Park 11 am.**

**International Talk Like A Pirate Day**

September 21 –

**Aware Ones Zoom 11 am.**

1938: The Great

Hurricane of 1938, AKA The Long Island Express, hits Long Island, New York. The hurricane was estimated to have killed between 682 and 800 people. Photo: National Geographic.



September 22

**Autumn Equinox** – Fall begins!





Rosh Hashanah – Begins at sundown.



September 25 – **Writer's Group @ Jensen House of**



**Brews, 6:30 pm.** National Quesadilla Day

September 26 – **Aware Ones at Sandsprig Park 11 am.**



September 28 – **Aware**

**Ones Zoom 11 am.**

Ask a Stupid Question Day (one of my favorite days)

**October** Seafood Month

October 1 Yom Kippur – begins at sunset.



Henry Ford  
Introduced the Model  
T (1908)



October 3 –  
**Aware Ones at Flagler Park, 11 am.** World  
Smile Day



October 5 – **Aware Ones Zoom 11 am.**

October 9 – **Writer's Group @ Jensen House of Brews, 6:30 pm.** Leif Erikson Day

October 10 – **Aware Ones at Sandsprit Park 11 am.**



1964: The opening ceremony of the 1964 Summer Olympics in Tokyo, Japan, is broadcast live in the first Olympic telecast relayed by geostationary communication satellite.



October 12 – **Aware Ones Zoom 11 am.**

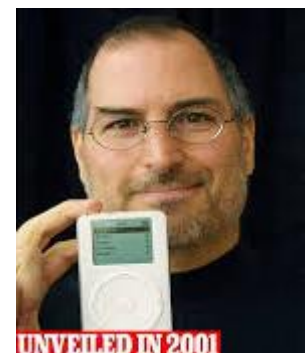
October 13 Indigenous People Day

October 17 – **Aware Ones at Sandsprit Park 11 am.** National Pasta Day



October 19 – **Aware Ones Zoom 11 am.**

Final battle of the Revolutionary War (1781). Washington accepts Cornwallis surrender at Yorktown.



October 23 – **Writer's Group @ Jensen House of Brews, 6:30 pm.**

iPod First Revealed (2001)



October 24 – **Aware Ones at Sandsprit Park 11 am.** United Nations Day

Nations Day

1929: Black Thursday, the start of the Wall Street Crash of 1929 begins.

October 26 – **Aware Ones Zoom 11 am.**

October 27 Black Cat Day







October 30 **National Candy Corn Day**

October 31 – **Aware Ones at Sandspruit Park 11 am.**

**Halloween**

Juliette Gordon Low Born in 1860, she started Girl Scouting in the United States in 1912.



## **LIVES LIVED – LIVES LOST**

### **June**

**26** Bill Moyers, 91, American journalist and political commentator (*Bill Moyers Journal*), White House press secretary (1965–1967), prostate cancer.



- Lalo Schifrin, 93, Argentine-born American film and television composer (*Mission: Impossible*, *Dirty Harry*, *Rush Hour*), five-time Grammy Award winner, complications from pneumonia.



**28** D. Wayne Lukas, 89, American Hall of Fame horse trainer, four-time Kentucky Derby winner, MRSA.



**29**

S. Daniel Abraham, 100, American medical industry executive and philanthropist, founder of SlimFast.



### **July**

**1** Florence Delay, 84, French writer and actress (*The Trial of Joan of Arc*, *Le Jouet criminel*, *Écoute voir*), member of the Académie Française.



- Jimmy Swaggart, 90, American evangelist, founder of Jimmy Swaggart Ministries, complications from cardiac arrest.



**3** Michael Madsen, 67, American actor (*Reservoir Dogs*, *Kill Bill: Volume 2*, *Donnie Brasco*), heart failure.



#### **Pascal's Wager**

Waste your whole life just in case the wild, unfounded guesses of first millennial goat herders turn out to be more accurate than the demonstrable facts of modern science.



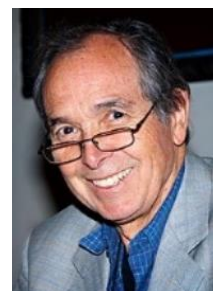
**8** [Paulette Jiles](#), 82, American author (*News of the World*) Her 2016 novel *News of the World* was a finalist for the National Book Award for Fiction.



**9** [Martha K. Schwebach](#), 86, American nurse practitioner. the first family nurse practitioner in the United States. In 1974, she was honored at the White House as one of Ten Outstanding Young Women of America.



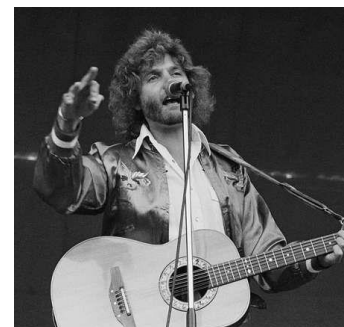
**10** [David Gergen](#), 83, American political commentator and advisor, White House Communications Director (1976–1977, 1981–1984), complications from Lewy body dementia. He graduated with honors from Yale University and Harvard Law School, and was awarded 27 honorary degrees.



**11** [Martin Cruz Smith](#), 82, American novelist (*Gorky Park*, *Nightwing*, *Havana Bay*).



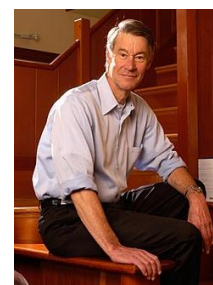
- [Moshe Zar](#), 88, Israeli religious Zionist and convicted terrorist. In 1984, he was convicted of membership in the terrorist organization the "Jewish Underground"



**13** [Dave Cousins](#), 85, English musician (*Strawbs*) and songwriter ("Lay Down", "Shine on Silver Sun"). He held a degree in Statistics and Pure Mathematics from the University of Leicester, and also followed a career in radio.



**14** [Eileen Fulton](#), 91, American actress (*As the World Turns*, *Nero Wolfe*, *Our Private World*).



**15** [Robert W. Fuller](#), 88, American physicist, co-founder of The Hunger Project. He was president of Oberlin College 1970–1974, where he championed diversity and curricular reform.



- [Jack McAuliffe](#), 80, American brewer. he founder of the New Albion Brewing Company in Sonoma, California, considered the first American microbrewery in 1976.

**16** [Bill Clay](#), 94, American politician, member of the U.S. House of Representatives (1969–2001). He was a member of the Democratic Party and one of the 13 co-founding members of the Congressional Black Caucus.



- [Connie Francis](#), 87, American pop singer ("Everybody's Somebody's Fool", "Pretty Little Baby", "My Heart Has a Mind of Its Own"), pneumonia.

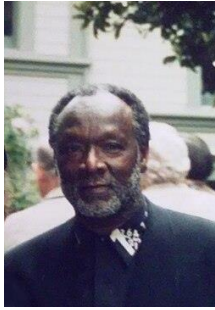


**18** [Edwin Feulner](#), 83, American political scientist, founder of The Heritage Foundation. a think tank that Newt Gingrich, in

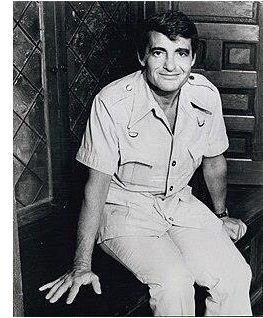




a New York Times column, called "the Parthenon of the conservative metropolis."



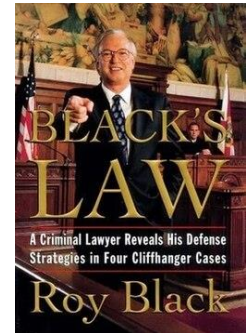
**19** [Raymond Jennings Saunders](#), an American visual artist known for his multimedia paintings which often have sociopolitical undertones. Saunders is known for his late 1960s pamphlet *Black is a Color*, which argues against metaphoric uses of the concept "black" in both the mainstream abstract and conceptual art world and Black Nationalist cultural writing of the time.



**20** [Tom Troupe](#), 97, American actor (*Kelly's Heroes*, *My Own Private Idaho*, *The Devil's Brigade*). Troupe was born in 1928 and grew up in North Kansas City, Missouri. Troupe served in the Korean War and was awarded a Bronze Star medal.



- [Malcolm-Jamal Warner](#), 54, American actor (*The Cosby Show*, *Malcolm & Eddie*, *The Resident*) and musician, Grammy winner (2015), drowned in Costa Rica after being caught in a strong current..



**21** [Roy Black](#), 80, American defense attorney Roy Black was chosen as a top lawyer by Super Lawyers between 2006 and 2024.



- [Rose Leiman Goldemberg](#), 97, American playwright and screenwriter (*The Burning Bed*, *Stone Pillow*).
- [June Wilkinson](#), 85, English actress (*The Private Lives of Adam and Eve*, *The Bellboy and the Playgirls*) and model (*Playboy Magazine*). At the height of her career she was called "the most photographed nude in America".



**22** [George Kooymans](#), 77, Dutch musician (Golden Earring) and songwriter ("Twilight Zone", "Radar Love"), complications from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis.

- [Chuck Mangione](#), 84, American flugelhornist, composer ("Feels So Good") and actor (*King of the Hill*), Grammy winner (1977, 1979).
- [Ozzy Osbourne](#), 76, English Hall of Fame musician (Black Sabbath), songwriter ("Paranoid"), and television personality (*The Osbournes*), heart attack.



**24** [Hulk Hogan](#), aka **Terry Gene Bollea**, 71, American Hall of Fame professional wrestler (WWF, WCW) and actor (*Suburban Commando*), heart attack.





- [Dame Cleo Laine](#), 97, English jazz singer (*On the Town*), Grammy winner (1986).

**26** [Tom Lehrer](#), 97, American singer-songwriter ("*The Elements*", "*The Old Dope Peddler*", "*The Vatican Rag*"), satirist, and mathematician. Lehrer said: "Political satire became obsolete when Henry Kissinger was awarded the Nobel peace prize."



**27** [Richard Lee](#), 62, American marijuana rights activist. Lee is regarded as a central figure in Northern California's medical marijuana movement. He also operated a coffee shop. He has been active in working to end cannabis prohibition since 1992.



**28** [Ryne Sandberg](#), 65, American Hall of Fame baseball player (Chicago Cubs) and manager (Philadelphia Phillies), prostate cancer.

**31** AHA Board Member, [Dr. Abby Hafer](#) passed away on July 31st in hospice care.



## August



**1** [Jeannie Seely](#), 85, American singer ("*Don't Touch Me*", "*I'll Love You More (Than You Need)*", "*Wish I Didn't Have to Miss You*"), intestinal infection

**3** [Lori Cannon](#), 74, American LGBT activist and AIDS awareness advocate.



- [Loni Anderson](#), 79, American actress (*WKRP in Cincinnati*, *All Dogs Go to Heaven*, *A Night at the Roxbury*).

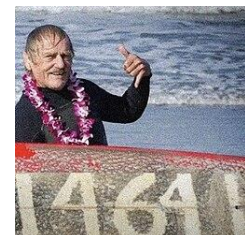
**5** [Col Joye](#), 89, Australian Hall of Fame singer and business manager (Bee Gees, Andy Gibb).



**6** [Suleiman Obeid](#), 41, Palestinian footballer (Shabab Al-Am'ari, national team), Obeid was shot and killed by Israeli forces in Gaza while waiting for humanitarian aid.



**9** [Dale Webster](#), 76, American surfer. set the official Guinness World Record for the "most consecutive days spent surfing" (14,641)





**11** [Danielle Spencer](#), 60, American actress (*What's Happening!!*) and veterinarian, cancer.



- [Sheila Jordan](#), 96, American jazz singer. Jordan pioneered a bebop and scat jazz singing style, with an upright bass as the only accompaniment.

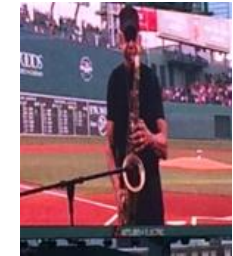


**14** [Jackie Bezos](#), 78, American philanthropist, co-founder of the Bezos Family Foundation. She was the mother of Jeff and Mark Bezos. She provided the initial investment to launch Amazon.com and was a philanthropist as co-founder and president of the Bezos Family Foundation.



**17** [Terence Stamp](#), 87, English actor (*Billy Budd*, *Superman II*, *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*).

**19** [Michael Antunes](#), 85, American saxophonist (John Cafferty & the Beaver Brown Band, Ernie and the Automatics) and actor (*Eddie and the Cruisers*), kidney failure.



**20** [Norma Nolan](#), 87, Argentine model and beauty pageant winner, Miss Universe (1962).

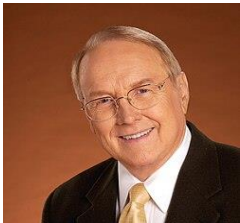


- [Brent Hinds](#), 51, American heavy metal musician (Mastodon, Giraffe Tongue Orchestra) and songwriter ("Colony of Birchmen"), Grammy winner (2018), traffic collision.

- [Frank Caprio](#), 88, American judge and television personality (*Parking Wars*), pancreatic cancer.



**21** [James Dobson](#), 89, American evangelist and writer (*Marriage Under Fire*), founder of Focus on the Family. He was the son, grandson, and great-grandson of Church of the Nazarene ministers.



**22** [Ron Turcotte](#), 84, Canadian Hall of Fame jockey (Secretariat).

**23** [Forrest Lucas](#), 83, American oil industry executive, founder of Lucas Oil. Lucas was a founder of Protect the Harvest, a nonprofit organization which opposes "the radical animal rights movement" and particularly the Humane Society of the United States.



## Heroes



Mexico's president just sent rescue teams to Texas. After all the hate. After all the anti-immigrant policies. After all the racism toward brown people. She still helped. She still showed up. She still did the right thing. To a red state that wouldn't do the same for her. That's leadership.

That's power. That's a woman.

swagman



"I don't mind you having a black character, but please don't show them in school together."

- Southern Reader, 1968



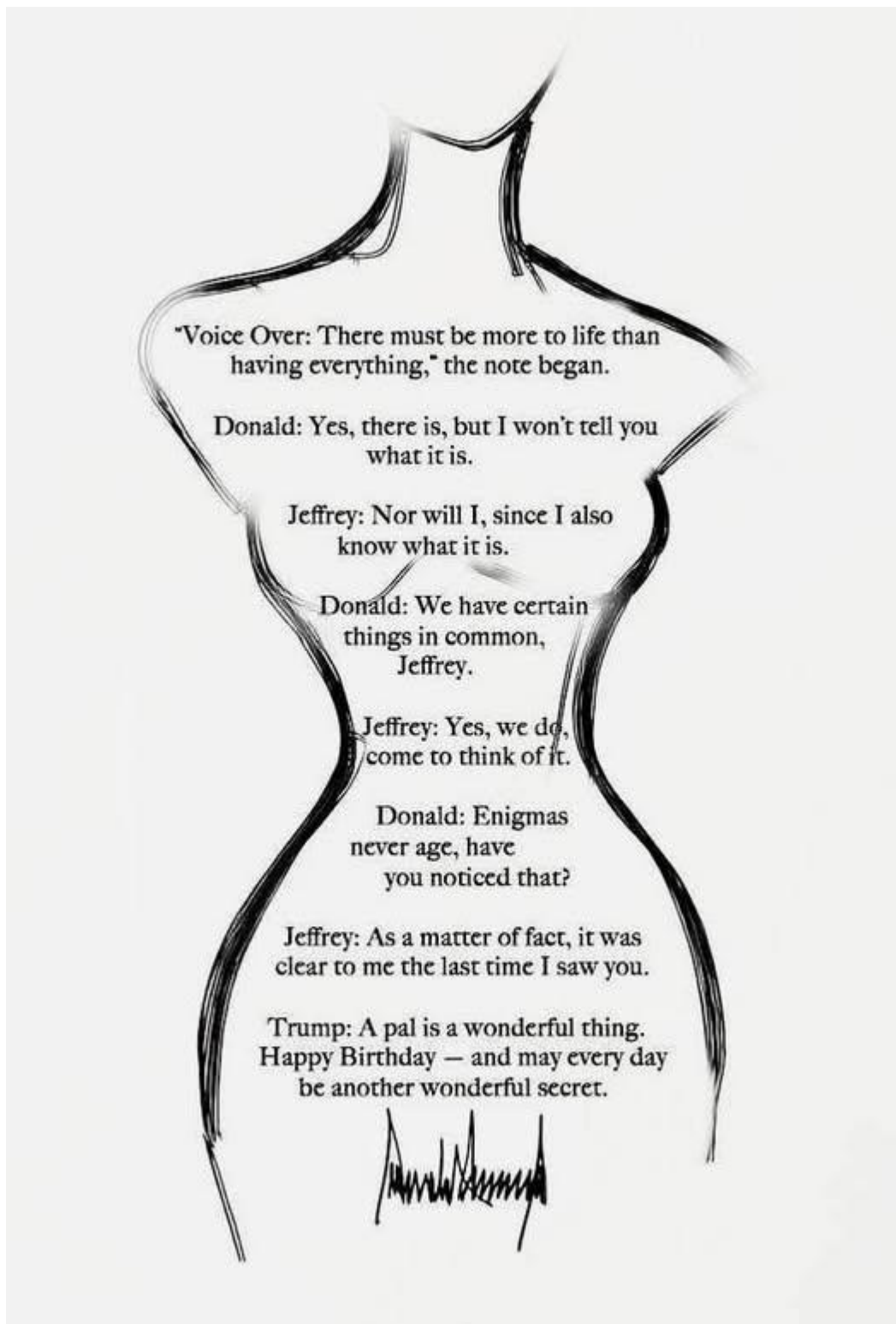
"Either you print it just the way I draw it or I quit. How's that?"

- Charles Schulz

***When Cartoons Take Center Stage in Life, Be It Vulgar or Be It Polite. Be a hero! Take a Bow, Boys!!!***



## Asshole(s) of the Month





Republicans Against Trumpism  
@rpsagainstrump.bsky.social

Scott Soucek of Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, who said he was voting for Trump in 2024 to fight child trafficking, is now charged with 10 counts of possessing child pornography.

His wife, Stephanie Soucek, is the chairwoman of the Door County Republican Party.



Charlie Kirk: "I'm sorry. If I see a Black pilot, I'm going to be like, 'Boy, I hope he's qualified.'"

The guy leading the young conservative movement who was **rejected** from West Point, **dropped out** of community college after a few months of attending, and **never completed** his part-time online degree is **concerned that others aren't qualified to do their jobs.**

I hope The Tuskegee Airmen come back from the dead just to beat the living sh\*t out of this muttonhead.



Tim Burchett (r-Tn, House Oversight Committee) dismisses Trump being friends with Epstein: "It's

just like me. I know a lot of dirtbags myself."

## Humanist Quotes

**"Should schools teach atheism?  
No. There is no need to teach  
atheism. It's the natural result of  
education without indoctrination."**

- Ricky Gervais



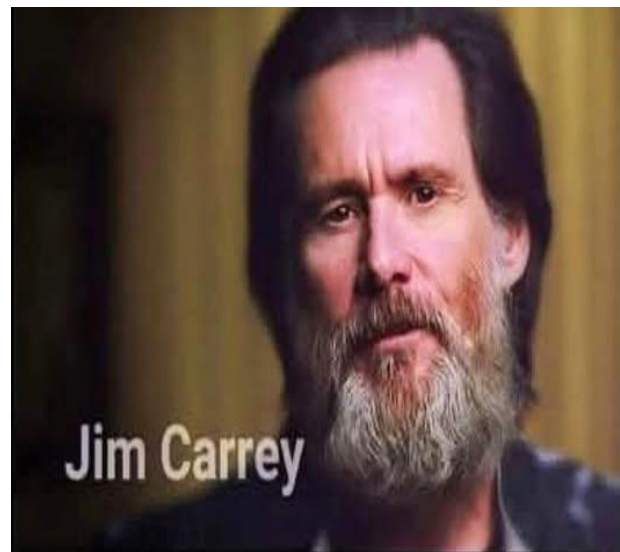
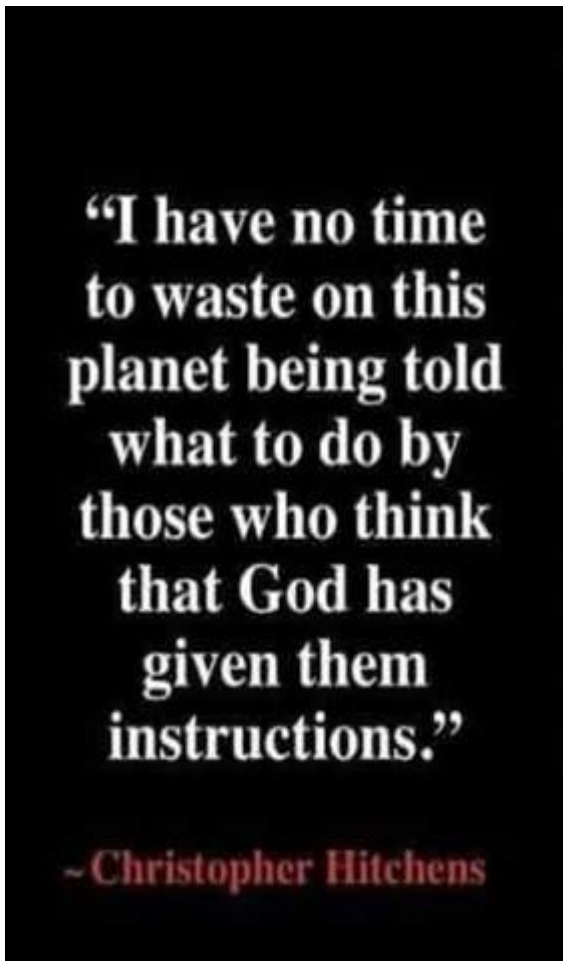
**"It took many years  
of vomiting up all the filth  
I'd been taught about myself,  
and half-believed, before I was able  
to walk on this earth as though  
I had a right to be here."**

James Baldwin,

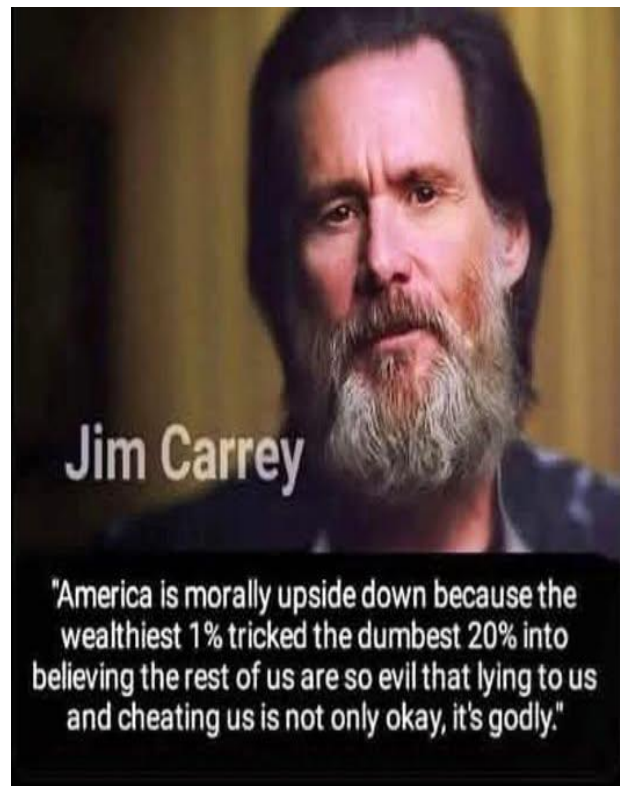
American author, social critic  
and political activist  
(1924 — 1987)

**"I have no time  
to waste on this  
planet being told  
what to do by  
those who think  
that God has  
given them  
instructions."**

~ Christopher Hitchens



**"America is morally upside down because the  
wealthiest 1% tricked the dumbest 20% into  
believing the rest of us are so evil that lying to us  
and cheating us is not only okay, it's godly."**





# COMMENTARY

## TRUMP'S WHITE HOUSE SPECIAL ASSISTANT REALLY JUST SAID THIS ON FOX NEWS:



**"What I saw at the  
Smithsonian Museum was  
an overemphasis on slavery.**

**We should be able to  
take our kids through  
the Smithsonian and  
be proud when we leave!"**

**- Lindsay Halligan, White House special assistant**

Dear Lindsay,

**400 YEARS** of brutal bondage, torture,  
and murder **SHOULD** be emphasized.

The generations of Black Americans who  
built this nation with their own hands and  
their own pain **SHOULD** be emphasized.

**The true history of this country  
SHOULD BE EMPHASIZED, even if  
the TRUTH makes you uncomfortable!**



**WE MUST NOT ALLOW MAGA TO REWRITE HISTORY!**



**THIS IS WORTH THE FEW**



**MINUTES  
THAT IT  
TAKES TO  
READ  
AND  
DIGEST!**

A woman dies at age 65 before collecting one benefit check. She and her employer paid into the system for almost 50 years, and she collected NOTHING. Keep in mind all the working people that die every year who paid into the system and got nothing. And these governmental morons mismanaged the money and stole from the system, so that it's now going broke? *BEAUTIFUL!*

And they have the audacity to call today's seniors "vultures" in an attempt to cover their ineptitude. *DISGRACEFUL!*

The real reason for renaming our Social Security payments is so the government can claim that all those social security recipients are receiving entitlements thus putting them in the same category as welfare and food stamp recipients.

*F.Y.I.* By changing the name of SS contributions, it gives them a means to refute this program in the future. It's free money for the government to spend under this guise. The Social Security check is now (*or soon will be*) referred to as a Federal Benefit Payment?

I'll be part of the one percent to forward this. I am forwarding it because it touches a nerve in me, and I hope it will be in



you. Please keep passing it on until everyone in our country has read it. The government is now referring to our Social Security checks as a "Federal Benefit Payment."

This is NOT a benefit. It is OUR money, paid out of our earned income! Not only did we all contribute to Social Security, but our employers did too! It totaled 15 percent

of our income before taxes. *(This should be enough for you to forward this message, if not read on.)*

If you averaged \$30K per year over your working life, that's close to \$180,000 invested in Social Security.

If you calculate the future value of your monthly investment in social security (\$375/month, including both you and your employers' contributions) at a meager 1 percent interest rate compounded monthly, after 40 years of working you'd have more than \$1.3+ million dollars saved.

This is your personal investment. Upon retirement, if you took out only 3 percent per year, you'd receive \$39,318 per year, or \$3,277 per month.

That's almost three times more than today's average Social Security benefit of \$1,230 per month, according to the Social Security Administration. (Google it – it's a fact). And your retirement fund would last more than 33 years (until you're 98 if you retire at age 65)! I can only imagine how much better most average-income people could live in retirement if our government had just invested our money in low-risk interest-earning accounts.

Instead, the folks in Washington pulled off a bigger Ponzi scheme than Bernie Madoff ever did (*or Lyndon Johnson*). They took our money and used it elsewhere. They "forgot" (*oh yes, they knew*) that it was OUR money they were taking.

They didn't have a referendum to ask us if we wanted to lend the money to them ... and they didn't pay interest on the debt they assumed. And recently they've told us that the money won't support us for very much longer. (*Isn't it funny that they NEVER say this about welfare payments?*)

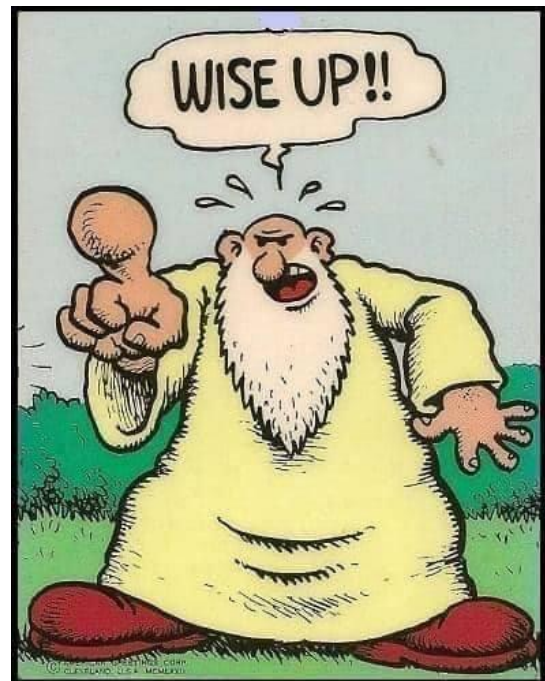
But is it our fault they misused our investments? And now, to add insult to injury, they're calling it a benefit, as if we never worked to earn every penny of it. This is stealing! Just because they borrowed the money, it doesn't mean that our investments were for charity!

Let's take a stand. We have earned our right to Social Security and Medicare. Demand that our legislators bring some sense into our government. Find a way to keep Social Security and Medicare going for the sake of the 92% of our population who need it.

Then call it what it is:

Our *Earned Retirement Income*.  
90 percent of people won't forward this.

PLEASE! Will you?



Provided by Gale Baker

# *I Need a Word!*



*By Lucy Thorp*

"Mom", my eleven-year-old-self hollered, "I need a word!"

Of course, Mom being Mom, she didn't give me a word. She gave me a Dictionary.

"Find it," she smiled.

I was no stranger to the dictionary. I used it to look up meanings of words and how to spell words. But I had never used it to FIND a word. I explored my way from synonym to synonym. And then, I discovered the word! The word I needed – the word that worked – was the word, "eloquent".

Thus began my love for words, the right words. Words have meaning! Words are important! Sometimes you need to hunt for the perfect word. Hopefully you will find it. Thank you, Mom.

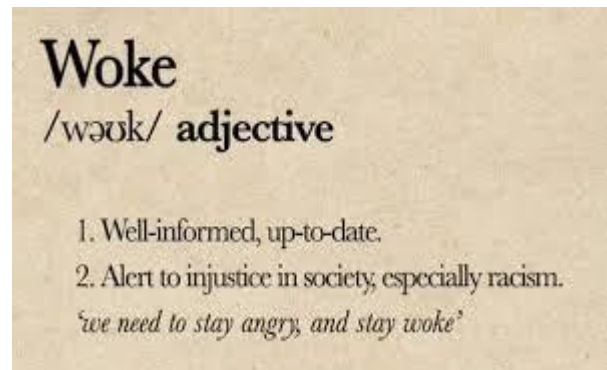


MAGA and the Orange Sh\*t Clown (OSC, I can't say the name) have changed words, bastardized words, contorted words and just plain made-up words.

The two bastardized words that drive me the most nuts are "Woke" and "DEI". Yes, I know that DEI is not a word. OSC (Orange Sh\*t Clown) and MAGA do not.

## WOKE

- Dictionary definition: Woke: past tense of Wake.
- Dictionary definition: Wake:
  1. To emerge from sleep: often with *up*.
  2. To be or remain awake.
  3. To become aware or alert.



Hurrah! Let's wake up EVERY morning. Think about it. What if you don't wake up for a day or two, or a year, or a Rip Van Winkle life? You are either dead or in a coma. That wouldn't matter to you because you are no longer aware. You are dead. You are in a coma. You are not AWAKE which means you are not WOKE!

## MAGA and OSC (Orange Sh\*t Clown) definition of Woke:

Woke is used as a catchall for all things liberal. All programs, policies, politics and ideologies that MAGA loathes and dislikes. Especially when it comes to LGBTQ+, women, people of color, immigrants (legal and undocumented), and anyone else they choose to despise. They crow that they are owning the *Libtards!*

Ironically, in the 1930's, Black people started using the term "stay woke" as a reminder to be aware of racism and discrimination. Here is an example of racism in 1930's per a recent column by The Palm Beach Post's Frank Cerabino:

*A popular Florida postcard from the era was titled "Free lunch in the Everglades". It featured a poem:*

*"Have you met the Florida gator  
He's the champion negro hater  
Although he finds many things to eat  
His favorite meal is negro meat"*

The illustration was a black man being attacked by a hungry alligator.



If you find the above poem utterly abhorrent, *you* are Woke.

If you find a white cop, lynching a Black man by kneeling on his neck for 9 minutes, smirking as people are taking videos; absolutely disgusting and nauseating, *you* are Woke.

If you find a president who instructs armed men to use tear gas and pepper spray to clear Lafayette Square for a photo op so he could walk to St. John's church (which he will never step into)



holding a bible (which he will never read) upside down with his face in a loathsome sneer and doing a thumbs up, repugnant and revolting, *you* are Woke.

Of course, if you think all of the above is okay, you are not Woke! Bully for you, MAGAT!

Personally, I prefer to be Woke. I am PROUD to be Woke. Us *Libtards* need to reclaim the word.

## DEI

Now a challenge. DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion)

This is a challenge because it is a phrase comprised of three very different words whereas MAGA and OSC use it as a single NEGATIVE WORD. Let's start by breaking down each word.

- Diversity: Dictionary definition: 1. The state of being diverse. 2. Variety
- Diverse: Dictionary definition: 1. Different from one another; distinct. 2. Varied.

My best childhood friend, Lorel, is second generation Japanese American. We met when I was 8 and she was 7. We were sisters! I heard her dad one time joke that he was Coors' Beer "token minority". True.

Except for the Saiki family, there were no people of color in our community. Jessica, Lorel's mother, was an amazing artist, writer, musician and cook. I fell in love with her art that was displayed throughout their home, the puppet shows she produced at the Golden, Colorado Library (writing the plays and creating the puppets), listening in awe as she played the harp and discovered the wonderfully delicious world of Japanese cuisine. To this day I love all things Japanese. I have a wall of Lorel's art; she is as talented an artist and writer as her mother. I certainly feel that I am a better human being because of the Saiki family and my still BFF, Lorel.

- Equity: Dictionary definition: 1. Fairness or impartiality; justness. 2. Something that is fair or equitable. 3. *Law* Justice based on natural reason or ethical judgement.

Once upon a time in America you could lynch a black man, take pictures and have a picnic under the tree he was hanging from, just because he was black. No Justice.



# TRUMPISMS

## The Most Bizarre Things He's Actually Said (or Invented)



**„We're going to reduce drug prices by 1,000%—maybe even 1,500%.“**

Math is hard, folks.



**„Nobody knew health care could be so complicated.“**

Literally everyone knew.



**„I have the best words.“**

Proceeds to say „anemone“ instead of „anonymous.“



**„The Continental Army took over the airports in 1775.“**

Paul Revere: „This is your captain speaking...“



**„The noise from windmills causes cancer.“**

Wind power now officially scarier than radiation.



**„If we stop testing, we'd have fewer cases“**

Next up: „If we stop counting calories, we won't gain weight.“



**„Toilets, you have to flush them 15 times.“**

America's plumber-in-chief.



**„We're building a wall in Colorado.“**

Geography: not even once.



**„We must unregulate the inflationary conspirionism!“**

A totally made-up word from last night. Possibly trademarked.



Synonyms: covfefe, misundereestimate, bigly 🤔🤔

Once upon a time in America you could be denied a job because you were black or female or something else the boss didn't like. And once upon a time in America you were paid less for the same job if you were black or a woman (don't bitch.... You got a job!) No fairness.

Once upon a time in 1970 I was working in a drug store, I was good at what I did. My register almost always balanced to the penny. I was in charge of the front counter ordering and inventory. My boss loved me! Then they hired a man a year younger than me. I trained him but he really wasn't that into it. Only did what he had to do. He wasn't bad, his register usually balanced within a dollar or two – not on the penny like mine. I discovered he was making 50 cents an hour more than me. Twenty dollars a week! What is twenty dollars in

1970's money worth today? The sites if found broke it down to between \$165 and \$167. That is between \$8580.00 and \$8684.00 per year. It is NOT chump change. I asked the boss (who LOVED me) why. „He's a man,“ my boss replied like a dyed-in-the-wool chauvinist. And it was good enough for 1970.

Thank goodness it's not good enough today. And thank goodness lynching is frowned upon today (well, mostly). And, no, I don't think being paid less is on par with lynching!

- Inclusion: Dictionary definition: 1. The act of including. 2. That which is included.
- Include: Dictionary definition: 1. To have as a component part; contain. 2 To place in a general category, aggregate, etc.



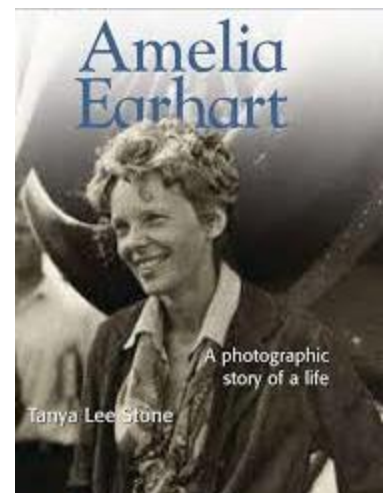
Inclusion in society is a recognition that we all are a component of society. The same way that tulips, roses, daffodils, peonies, and other flowers make up a beautiful garden. If you only have red

tulips and ignore the rest, the garden may be pretty. But not beautiful.

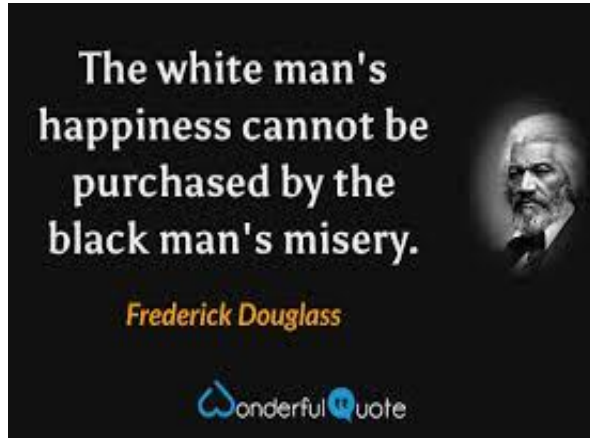
If society doesn't invite all walks of life, all people that may not look like you, all people that are *different*, society will miss out on a LOT of talent.

Here is a short list of people I greatly admire who refused to be rejected because they were different:

- Maya Angelou: Poet, writer, civil rights activist (her books are often on ban lists)
- Lucille Ball: Groundbreaking comedienne and television mogul
- Amelia Earhart: Aviator, when women weren't aviators.
- Martin Luther King Jr: Father of the modern-day civil rights movement, Nobel Peace Prize winner, American Treasure



- Fredrick Douglass: Runaway slave, educator, abolitionist and the most important figure of the 19<sup>th</sup> century civil rights movement.
- Ruth Bader Ginsburg: First Jewish woman (and second female) Supreme Court associate Justice



This list of individuals can go on and on and on and on and on and on and on and on and on and on. I ask, how could our world be better off without their voices?

How MAGA and OSC define DEI.

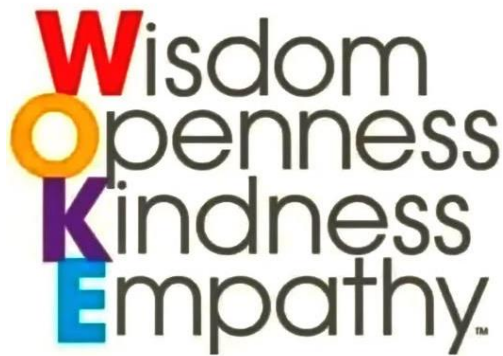
The problem is that MAGA has turned DEI into a WORD. A curse word.

MAGA's DEI definition: Most sites I visited agree that MAGA's definition of DEI focuses on race and gender at the EXPENSE of individual merit. They call it "reverse discrimination" against white men. They embrace discrimination against everyone else. If you are a DEI hire, you are considered incompetent because you are not a white man. Woke and DEI seem to be synonymous.

When the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapsed after being hit by the Singapore flagged container ship, *Dali*, MAGA and OSC yelled "DEI!" When the facts were examined, the vessel lost power and therefore, steerage just before impact. It's called an accident.

MAGA podcaster and Turning Point USA presenter, Charlie Kirk said, "If I [get on an airplane and] see a Black pilot, I'm gonna be like, boy, I hope he's qualified." Kirk later added that "he was being made to react that way because policies adopted by major companies regarding ethnic minorities meant less qualified people were given jobs with significant responsibility, including airline pilots."





I beg to differ with Mr. Charlie Kirk. If I see a Black person, a woman or any other marginalized human being enter the cockpit I'm going to be like, "Wow, you must be smart, educated, motivated and excellent to get this far in life with all the BS that people like Charlie Kirk throw at you!"

Breaking news! Charlie Kirk has now blamed the Texas floods on DEI. This is despite the OSC regime dismantling NOAA and the National Weather Service. This is despite the gutting of personnel and lacking enough weather balloons to accurately predict the amount of rain to expect. All of that had nothing to do with 116 plus dead and 160 plus still missing. So MAGA and Charlie Kirk says.

In 1961 Jackie Kennedy had Rachel Lambert Mellon design the White House Rose Garden. It was a gorgeous thing. It included a wide variety of roses, tulips, daffodils, chrysanthemums and other flowers and trees. It was very diverse. It was designed for seasonal beauty. I say *it was* because Melania Trump decided renovate the garden in 2021, ripping out all of the beautiful flowers and making it look like the entrance to an industrial park. It looks okay but more meh. Not very diverse. Nowhere near the arresting beauty it once contained. Then comes along OSC with bull dozers ripping out the plants and paving the whole thing over. No diversity whatsoever! UGLY!



to

Almost all of OSC's cabinet is DEI if you believe that the word means incompetent. Here's a taste:

- Pete Hegseth (aka Pete *Kegbreath*), Defense Secretary. He was a FOX weekend host, with no political experience and had to promise to quit drinking if appointed. We're not sure he kept that promise.
- Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., Health and Human Services. The son of the great Robert F. Kennedy has no medical background. He is a rabid anti-vaxxer and has endorsed a number of health claims not backed by science.
- Kristi Noem, Department of Homeland Security. Former Governor of South Dakota and killer of her 7-year-old daughter's 14-month-old puppy because she was incompetent and couldn't train it. She is now funneling money from Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to finance the government's war against immigrants, hiring more agents and building more detainment facilities (CC's or Concentration Camps). When a hurricane hits Alligator Auschwitz, or Miami, or Tallahassee or Tampa (and it WILL hit), no help will be coming because FEMA's money went to enlarge OSC's goon squad (*brownshirts=redhats*) so they could deport more people to concentration camps with no due process.

AND THE WINNER IS....



OSC, President. He is a 34-count convicted felon, adjudicated rapist, reality TV host whose show was cancelled because of poor ratings, six times bankrupted casinos (really, *six times?*), dozens of failed businesses, insurrectionist, grifter and all-around asshole who thinks he is starring in another reality TV show.

Examples of OSC's "best" words:

- Covfefe – ? No one knows not even the OSC nor the dictionary.
- Bigly – Big League? Huge?
- The Cyber – ? Another mumbled mystery.
- Country Nambia – No such country. There is a Zambia and a Namibia.
- Two Corinthians – I think he meant Second Corinthians

I could list dozens more OSC malapropisms, but space is limited, and no one has ever described the OSC as "eloquent"! We need to reclaim DEI!

I was so thrilled when my 11-year-old-self discovered the word "eloquent". Once I convinced the teacher that I found the word on my own, she entered my essay into the Countywide 6<sup>th</sup> grade essay contest. Unfortunately, I came in 4<sup>th</sup> place. I was devastated, I thought "eloquent" would put me over the top!

**If being woke means wanting healthcare  
for the sick, food for the hungry, and  
leaders who aren't pedophiles, then call  
me woke as hell!**





Henk Chabot - Rain (1933)

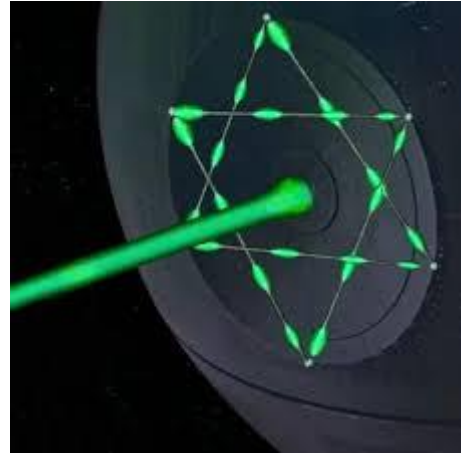
Marjorie Taylor Green is out there blaming motherfucking space lasers again, y'all.



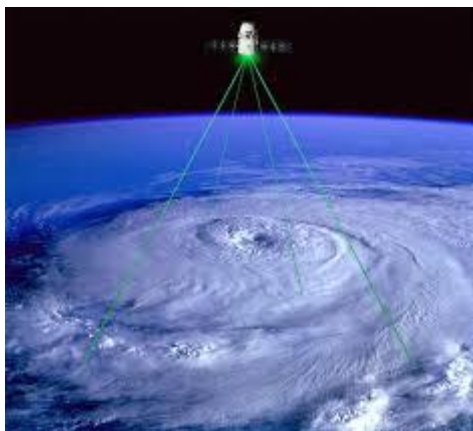
Now, to her credit, this time she refrained from blaming a specific ethnic group for the natural disasters and instead blamed "cloud seeding." Or, actually, she was careful not to *directly* blame the flooding in Texas on cloud seeding, but while the disaster was ongoing, she took to "even worse Twitter" to say, "I am introducing a bill that prohibits the injection, release, or dispersion of chemicals or substances into the atmosphere for the express purpose of

altering weather, temperature, climate, or sunlight intensity.” Adding, “We must end the dangerous and deadly practice of weather modification.”

And look, there’s a LOT wrong with that Tweet so I can’t go after everything — real hard to pass up pedant bait like “chemicals AND substances,” but I’m gonna do it — but the clear implication of it is that weather modification played some part in the deadly floods in Texas. Specifically, the injection of a chemical. This suggests she’s blaming “cloud seeding,” but it could also be a more veiled reference to the “chemtrail” family of conspiracy theories.



Of course, “cloud seeding” IS a real thing. Theoretically. I mean, people are really doing it, but there’s still some serious doubts as to whether it has any effect. The idea is that you dump a substance (usually silver iodide) into clouds that have the potential for rainfall in the hopes that giving the water something to accumulate on will trigger that rain to go ahead and fall. This practice has been going on for decades all over the world. It still has no definitive evidence of effectiveness, which is a **STRONG** indicator that it doesn’t work, but there’s absolutely no evidence to suggest it could cause a flood.



Now, like I said, MTG *did* stop short of directly blaming the deaths of those hundred plus people on nefarious, undisclosed, Illuminati cloud seeding. But fellow Georgia Republican Kandiss Taylor (of Jesus, Guns, Babies fame) chimed in to not only directly blame secret weather modification for the floods in Texas, but also for all the damage caused by Hurricane Helene. The failed gubernatorial candidate and aspiring failed congressional

candidate called the flooding in Texas “fake weather,” adding “If fake weather causes real tragedy, that’s murder”.

Now, to Kandiss’s credit, she *did* finally put an ampersand between “guns” and “babies” in her “Jesus Guns Babies” slogan so it no longer sounds less like an accusation. But that’s all the credit I can give her. When people tweeted back “Hey lady, can you



please wait to accuse us of being crisis actors until the crisis is at least over,” she said no. Specifically, she said, “I’m not walking back a thing. No one can control the way you raging liberals twist words”. See — I was taking her dangerously false attempt to hijack the deaths of scores of people (including children) to score political points with a conspiracy theory out of context guys.

But of course, none of this bullshit is new. And it’s not remotely isolated to this incident. Last year, the State of Tennessee passed a law banning “chemtrails.” Which is a bit like outlawing the vibranium trade or unicorn poaching. But the fact that chemtrails are a fever dream by people on the internet with bad source-checking protocols didn’t stop Florida from following suit with a



law against weather modification of their own. Arizona, Kentucky, Texas, and Pennsylvania are all in the process of passing similar legislation.

And look, it’s easy to overlook the malicious aspect of this and just focus on the idiocy. But these laws don’t exist because the

lawmakers genuinely think that the Illuminati is dumping chemicals out of the back of airplanes to make the frogs gay. They exist because that’s what the lawmakers want *you* to believe. Because, to be clear, there *are* nefarious people putting



toxic chemicals into the atmosphere that are causing deadly storms. And the people paid to ensure that they're able to continue doing that are the same motherfuckers who are passing these laws.

The fact is that at this point, the impact of climate change is too great to ignore. But as the climate turns against us ever more, even their most ardent supporters are starting to say "Okay, well then why are all the exact consequences all them hippies kept saying would happen happening?" And they've gotta go "Well that would be the... um... *Jewish*... space lasers."

See, this country may be run by idiocy, but that doesn't mean it's run by idiots. Sure, they've got an idiot at the top ... and a lot of idiots all the way through to the bottom. But the motherfuckers pulling the strings here aren't idiots. The oligarchs protecting their right to pollute, the tycoons trading our futures for their retirement, these people aren't stupid. They're wielding stupid as a tool, and it's a damn effective one. And part of the reason is that it's hard for us to take our opponents seriously when they're warning us about chemtrails and Jewish space lasers. It's so easy to dismiss that as too stupid to merit our attention. But our inattention to it is killing people. And we need to treat it as the homicidal misinformation it is, rather than "just some quirky bullshit a racist lady said."



scathingatheist.com



*Work From  
Both Sides  
Now  
By James Longo*

"I've looked at work from both sides now, from up and down, and still somehow it is work's illusions I recall, it really isn't work at all," Jack sang.

"Shouldn't that be love, life, or clouds, if I remember the lyrics correctly?" Jill asked, pointing out the discrepancy

"Au contraire, life is work, and work is life."

"Work is what you do to get money to live, that's all it is," Jill said, sounding exasperated.

"You can perceive work that way, and you wouldn't be wrong, but you can look at work from different points of view and see work differently.

"Oh, wise sage, please tell me how to see work," Jill said, rolling her eyes.

Jack flipped her the bird and didn't say a word. A couple of minutes passed.

"Okay, tell me all the different ways to look at work," Jill said, still sounding exasperated.

"You know, sometimes you are a lot of work."

It was Jill's turn to flip him the bird. "And your point is."

"How you look at work determines how much you like work."

"Come on, man, work sucks," Jill exclaimed.

"Yeah, if you look at how exploitative working for money is. You sell your time to an employer who charges a customer your time, plus overhead, plus a profit, and he keeps most of the profit."

"The employers would say, we're taking all the risk, why shouldn't we receive all the profits?"

"But the point is they pay out the least in labor and overhead to maximize profits."

"And as I said before, work sucks."

"Yeah, if you keep thinking about how much they are making off your labor, you'll never be happy at work; you always feel angry, exploited, and hateful."

"So, how do you get beyond that?"

"It's hard, employers pay just enough to keep employees employed. And for a lot of them, that's barely enough to make ends meet."

"That didn't answer the question," Jill said with a ball-busting grin.



"I hated work until the day I paid everybody off. Up until that point, I didn't own my stuff, my stuff owned me, while I was working to pay everyone off, I stopped looking at my employer and saw work as my means to freedom."

"And when you paid everyone off?"

"Working a particular job stopped being something I had to do and started being something I wanted to do. It is always easier to do something you want to do, instead of something you have to do."

"But why are you still working into old age?" Jill asked.

"I don't know. It breaks up my week. It gives me something to do. I get to interact with people. I get to try to solve people's problems. I get to make some people less miserable after fifty-five years of work. I have forgotten how to play. Work has become my play."

"You know, there is something seriously wrong with you," Jill said with raised eyebrows.

"And you know you are still a lot of work," Jack said with a smirk.

"You know, *you* are a lot of work yourself."

"Lucky for us, it is a labor of love," they said in unison, and both laughed.



# The Legend of Maga Mike

By Virgil Thorp

Recently, on a steamy July day, Lucy and I were headed to a waterside restaurant on the St. Lucie lagoon for an afternoon lunch. Like many people when Florida feels like a slow-cooker, we didn't feel like heating up the house boiling some shrimp, yet we were hungry.



Our route takes us through the Lakewood Park village, past a variety of homes, most of whom do not advertise their political persuasions in non-election years. Unfortunately, there are some residents whose notions are almost like the mythological story of captive Jews in Egypt who marked their homes with lamb's blood to save their eldest sons from the angel of God. The Passover story. Only, in Lakewood Park, these people fly Trump-Vance flags instead of lamb's blood.

I had taken down our Harris Walz yard sign after the following weekend of the November 2024 election. It is now more than 6 months since the election and these cultists have not removed their signs and flags. indeed, many have flown new flags when the old ones have deteriorated to faded and tattered Trump pride.

Because we are who we are, Lucy and I have gotten into the habit of flipping a middle finger salute or shouting "shame" at any residence that sports one of those repugnant



Trump-Vance 2024 flags.

Sometimes there were residents who returned our salutes and on occasion chased us down the street and angrily shaken a fist at us. Thankfully, none of them have been armed. But still, I have felt a rising amount of hostility.

There's a guy I met on face book who I call MAGA Mike. He was very self-righteous when he sent me a disagreeable post with his viewpoints – some of which I will comment on as I read it:



Like many MAGA's, Mike has a real problem with the first black man to occupy the white house. Mike starts his post with:

"We tolerated Obama for 8 years and kept quiet.

"Here is my issue with the whole, 'let us all be a United

States again' that we heard from Biden. For the last 4+ years, the Democrats have gone and scorched earth. You have salted the fields and now you want to grow crops. The problem is 75+ million of us have memories longer than a hamster."

(Mike's rhetoric hints at inherent racism that has galled the right since Obama and Biden were elected. There's a hint of biblical proportions, but 75 million hamsters should have long memories! Mike goes on:)

"We remember the women's march (vagina hats and all) the day after inauguration."  
(Glorious that day wasn't it, Mike. Couldn't you see that very





few people shared your joy? BTW, did you happen to see all the people dancing in the streets when it was announced that Biden won in 2020? I did. Hell's bells, I was dancing as best as I could, too!)

Mike replied in quick succession, "We remember the 4 years of attacks and impeachments. We remember Maxine Walters telling followers to harass us in restaurants. We remember 'not our president' and the 'Resistance.' We remember non-stop in-your-face lies and open cover-ups from the media. We remember hundreds of Trump supporters physically attacked. We remember the President's spokesperson being kicked out of a restaurant."



(I remember the restaurant thing. It was at a Fried Chicken restaurant in Maryland, wasn't it? Gotta tell you, Mike, the administration's anti-LGBTQ and anti-racial stances does not sit well with many a bistro's serving personnel. I wouldn't order a salad with ranch dressing on it if I were you.)

Mike countered, "We remember riots, and looting. (When the cops killed George Floyd by pinning him down with a knee on his neck?) We remember "a comedian" holding up the President's severed head. (Oh dear, how dreadful!) We remember a play in Central Park paid with public funding, showing the killing of President Trump. (You've never been a big fan of Shakespeare have you, Mike) We remember Robert de Niro yelling "F" Trump" at the Tony's and getting a standing ovation. (I hope you also remember the dancing in the streets in 2020. I really want it to happen again, like 2028.)



"We remember Trump supporters getting Doxed and fired from jobs. (That's a real stretch Mike. You are going to have to provide evidence for that one.)

"We remember the total in-the-tank move on the mainstream media. We remember non-stop in-your-face lies and open cover-ups from the media." (WTF? Mike, I don't think you have been paying attention to the media. It isn't so "mainstream" as it is "legacy" which means it is owned by the rich guys.)

"We remember Nancy Pelosi tearing up the State of the Union



Address. (Me too. That was one of the sweetest moments of his presidency. She was so eloquent!) We remember the non-stop and live fact checking on our President and his supporters. (Oh Mike, not enough fact-checking. Remember, we stopped counting at around 30,000 lies).

Mike was starting to lose it. "We remember the President and his staff being spied on. We remember

five Senators shot on a ballfield.

(Gotta fact-check you Mike, on the last one, there were four people shot on a ballfield with only one of them being a congressman from Louisiana, the honorable or dishonorable – you choose – Steve Scalise. Scalise was shot in the hip and faced several surgeries before returning to congress where he still disgraces the constitution. The other people receiving wounds that day were Capitol Police Special Agents Crystal Griner and Zack Barth, a staffer for Rep. Roger Williams of Texas and – hardly worth mentioning – Matt Mika, a lobbyist for Tyson Foods.)

Mike's paranoia went professional: "We remember every so-called comedy show turn into nothing but Trump hate fests. (Mike, the jokes were writing themselves!)

We remember 95 percent negative coverage in the news. (You aren't talking about Fox news, are you?)

## Dear really stupid trump supporter..

donald trump didn't lower your taxes. He didn't get your roads fixed or your bridges built. He didn't get you healthcare coverage, lower the price of your prescriptions, decrease the deficit, end the opioid crisis, revive the coal industry, he didn't make "covid disappear", didn't make Mexico "pay for the wall", he didn't "put America First" and he sure as hell didn't "drain the swamp". So when you say he "fought for you", you mean he validated your hate. Because he didn't do a goddamn thing for you other than that.

We remember the state governors asking and getting everything they asked for and then blaming Trump for their problems. (Oh, you mean things like bridge repairs and disaster response to problems caused by Trump's dismantling oversight and rules and his dismal record of doing nothing but pushing Ivermectin and swallowing bleach during the Covid pandemic?)

We remember a Trump top aid[e] verbally assaulted in two DC restaurants. (You are repeating yourself, Mike. However, it could be that the aide in question was a shitty tipper.)

We remember people banging on the Supreme Court doors. (Are you mistaking the Supreme Court for the Capitol, Mike?)

We remember that we were called every name in the book for supporting President Trump. We remember being called Nazis. We remember being called Deplorables. We remember being called Fascists. (Your Fox buddy, Greg Gutfeld doubled down by embracing being a nazi and insulting black people. He said on Fox's noxious evening news show, the Five, "We need to learn from the Blacks. The way they





were able to remove the power from the n-word by using it. So from now on it's: What up, my Nazi? Hey, what up, my Nazi? Hey, what's hanging, my Nazi?"



We remember that Hollywood said they would leave after Trump was elected but they stayed. (It's okay Mike. You can hate Rosie O'Donnell, she won't mind.)

We remember [the] sitting President (Biden) calling us

"garbage" and Kamala (and the media) trying to tell us to "get past it because Biden doesn't matter anymore. This list is endless, but you get the idea. I will never give the Democrats a break for all the trouble they've caused. They've dug a very, very deep hole and it's going to take a very long time for them to crawl out of it." (Speaking of deep holes, I have one I call "Epstein")

Mike was now gasping with his rant, out of breath. (Mike, I know it is tough being called an asshole all the time, but aren't you being a little too sensitive?)

What is there to say? What is there to do? MAGA has just, gleefully, announced a new torture center. They are going to establish a concentration camp on an abandoned air strip in the Everglades. They thought that it would be so clever to name it, "Alligator Alcatraz" – some went further and

"Alligator Alcatraz" – The Distorted Heart of America



The United States of America, once a bastion of freedom and the rule of law, has become in 2025 a symbol of a deeply sick society.

called it “Alligator Auschwitz!”. It was a textbook example of annoying Eddie Haskell-ism that pervades the MAGA’s twisted perception of the world.

So, as I think about how I feel, living long enough to see a concentration camp constructed in my country, to simply shout, “Shame” at a MAGA flag is no longer enough. I will now say, “Fuck you! You did this to us. You did it to yourself. You stupid, stupid, pitiful assholes.” I think that fits.

And Just for your information, Mikey, your idol, Donald J. Trump, just called you and all the other MAGA’s ... *STUPID!*



# ARTICLES



The  
Kennedy  
Center

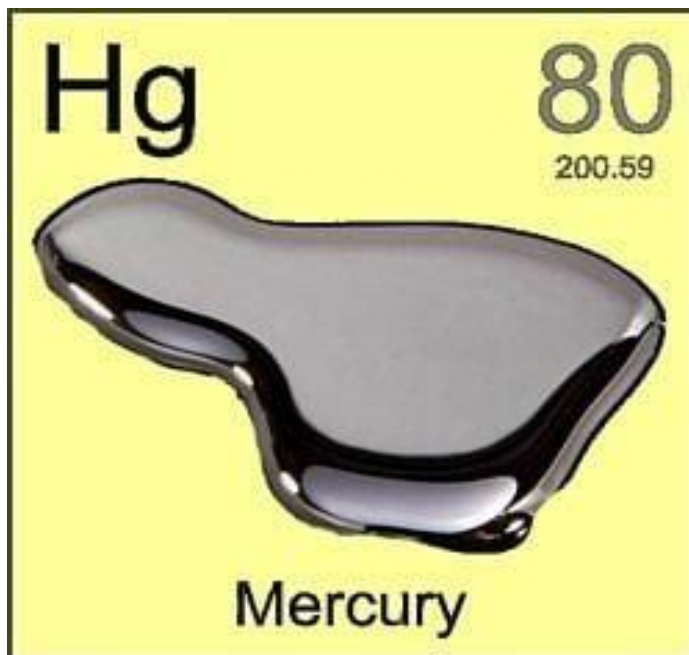
## NOTICE

The Kennedy Center Honors have been cancelled until 2029. In their place will be a cheesy annual program hosted by a vulgar white supremacist former game show host. These substitute shows will no longer honor the best talents in the American arts. Instead, they will reflect the middle-brow tastes of said vulgar white supremacist former game show host, who knows nothing about any arts (even “The Art of the Deal,” which he did not write). Your patience until this appalling spectacle is corrected would be much appreciated.



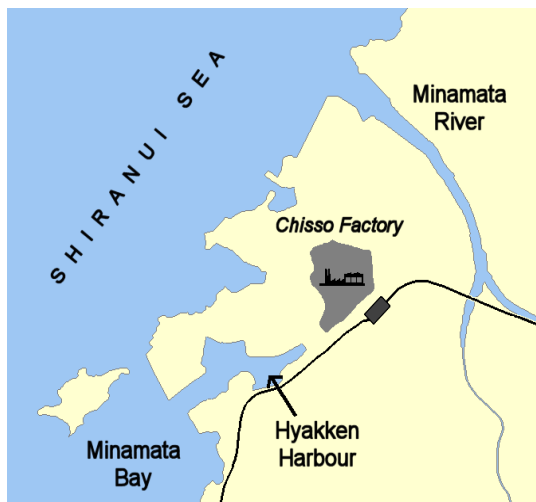
# Mercury Toxicity (Hg)

By Ed Zillioux



In 1990, the bioaccumulation of mercury toxicity in the Florida environment, especially in areas South of Lake Okeechobee and particularly in the Everglades National Park, had risen to the levels of scientific, human health and regulatory concern.

I have written, in some detail, of the first known case of mass poisoning from ingestion of fish contaminated with methyl mercury (MeHg), which were caught in Minamata Bay, Japan, between 1955 and 1956. The effects of the poisoning were first observed in animals with the deaths of 24 cats, 5 pigs, one dog and many crows. 40 families were also affected, causing death in more than a third of its victims and serious disabilities among those who survived.



Since the cause of the disease was not yet known, its neurological symptoms were referred to simply as Minamata Disease. The source of the contamination was traced to the

effluent from a chemical plant near the mouth of the Bay which,





in 1950 had diverted its former open sea discharge through a newly constructed channel that discharged directly into Minamata Bay. The factory used a process in which mercuric sulfate was used as a catalyst in the conversion of

acetylene to acetaldehyde producing methyl mercury as a byproduct in the discharge. Before it was discontinued, this process caused a total of 2920 cases of Minamata disease in Japan.

Prior to the 1990s, mercury toxicity in the fish and other biota (flora and fauna) in the Florida Everglades was barely noticed and generally ignored. However, in July 1989 one of the approximately 50 remaining of the critically endangered Florida Panthers was found dead. Subsequent analysis revealed that the female Panther contained extremely high concentrations of mercury leading researchers to conclude that mercury toxicity was the cause of death. Coming on the back of monitoring data that also showed highly elevated concentrations of mercury in fish in both the Everglades and elsewhere in Florida the death of the Panther was a Clarion call to action about mercury

### What is this Disease?

- Minamata disease is a form of methyl mercury poisoning caused by eating large quantities of fish and shellfish polluted by methyl mercury in factory wastewater. It is not a contagious disease transmitted through air or food, and it is not inherited.
- Minamata disease was officially discovered in 1956, and in 1968 the national government announced that it was a pollution disease caused by the Chisso Co., Ltd.

contamination problem threatening the Everglades.

There followed an explosion of research on the mercury in the Everglades that involves scientists from every regulatory department in the state of Florida as well as every industry contributing to the release of mercury to the environment including the electric power industry system, the cement industry, and even crematory exhaust (!).



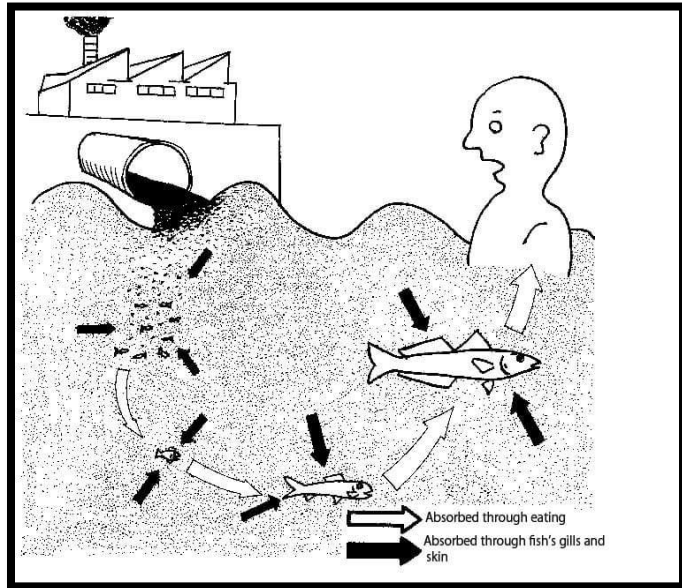
It was at this time that I had grown weary of working for a consulting firm in the middle of the “Bible belt” of Greenville, SC, and was in the market for an escape. There was a potential opening at Clemson University, but nothing definite. My wife Ivy and I decided to take a vacation to our previous home in Jupiter, Florida. While there, I looked up an old friend who worked in the environmental department at Florida Power and Light (FPL) headquarters in Juno beach. He and I shared the same major professor at the Rhode Island University’s Oceanographic Center. When he heard that I was in the market for a change in employment, he mentioned that there was an opening for a toxicologist on the lead team in his department. This was how I jumped into the middle of the explosion of mercury research that was just getting underway in and around the Everglades, all

within the service territory of FPL. This indeed became the largest and most significant aspect of my professional career. With my joining FPL, I also became an active member of the electric power Research Institute (EPRI), as well as the Florida Electric Power Coordinating Group (FCG).

At the same time, Dr. Tom Atkeson had been appointed to the Florida Department of Environmental Regulation (FDER) as Mercury Coordinator to help organize and oversee a multi-agency research effort which became known as the south Florida Mercury Science Program.

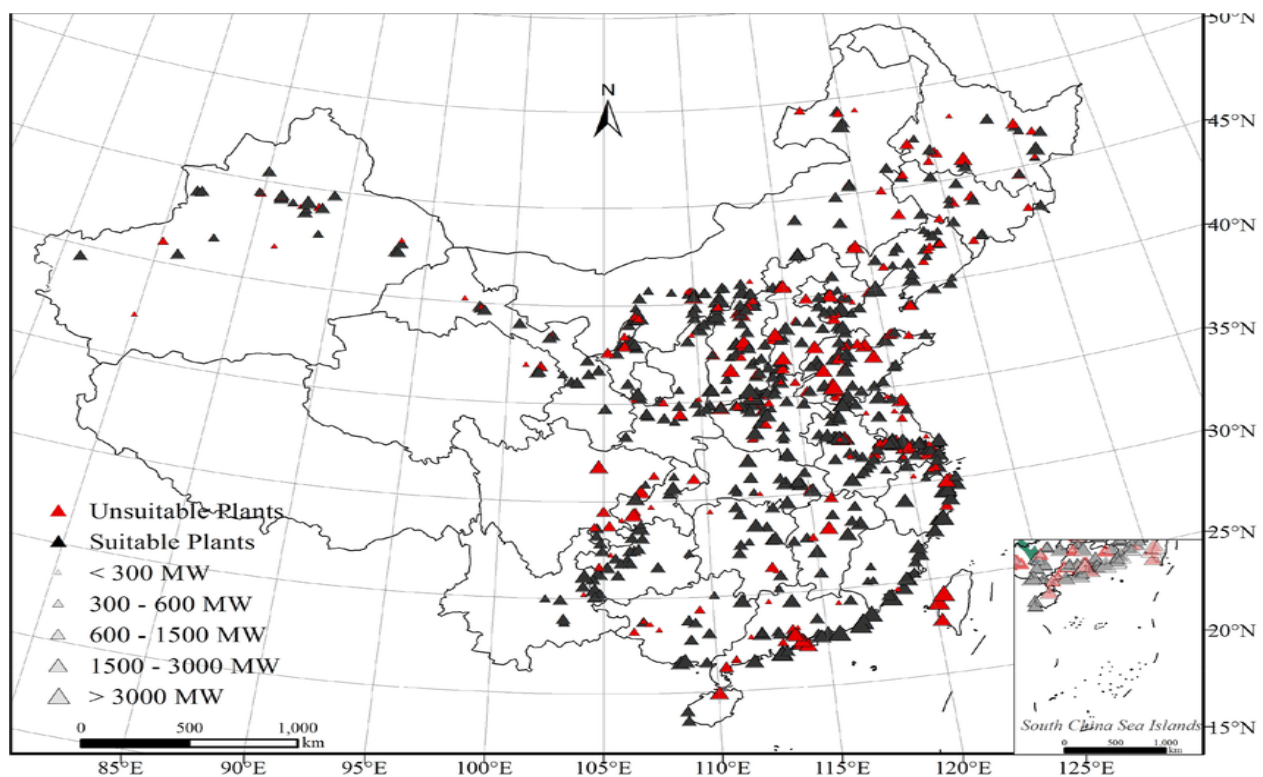
Tom and I became friends almost immediately and rare was the day that did not start with a phone call between us to discuss the status of various studies in the mercury toxicity program. Although we didn't always agree, working as it were on opposing sides of the mercury issue, our discussions were always cordial and often our disagreements ended with a better understanding of the particular issue. Our friendship remained productive though the almost 15 years of my employment at FPL until, sadly, shortly after my retirement, I learned that Tom had contracted Alzheimer's disease which rapidly deteriorated to his untimely death.

One of my first achievements as FPL's toxicologist was to convince management to scuttle their planned construction of a coal-fired plant in the East Glades area of southern Dade County. Instead, an oil-fired plant was built resulting in much less mercury emissions than a coal plant would have produced.



My first major research achievement was to initiate and secure funding for the Florida Atmospheric Mercury Study (FAMS) project. I recruited Dr. William Landing from Florida State University to lead the project. It consisted of building four 50-foot towers, one in the middle of the Florida Keys, two in the central Everglades and one at a lakeside north of Gainesville, FL. Dr. Landing was an obvious choice to lead this study. He was an accomplished atmospheric scientist who had used these towers in past projects. He taped each tower with realistic replicas of great horned owls to scare other birds away to avoid contamination of the samples.

This project was a huge success. It not only confirmed that the greatest deposition of atmospheric mercury occurred within the southern portion of the Everglades system, but it also showed that only a very small percentage of this deposition came from local sources. The majority of the mercury deposition correlated



perfectly with the southeast trade winds which form the northern equatorial winds crossing the Atlantic Ocean out of Africa. These



are the same winds that bring the Saharan dust clouds that regularly blanket Miami and other South Florida coastal regions.

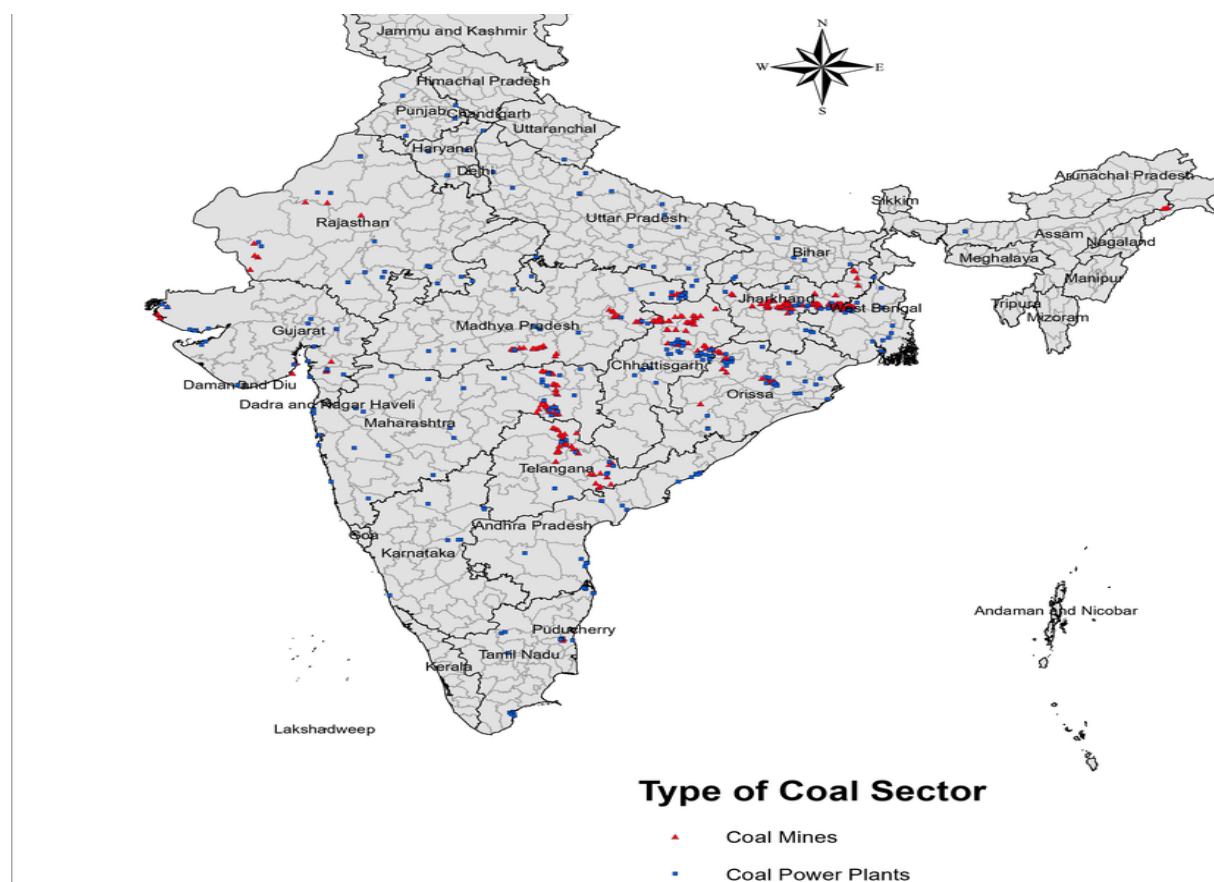
Actually, there are no major sources of mercury emissions from North Africa but if one follows the track of these trade winds, you'll find that they originate in or across both China and India, the world's largest sources of mercury emissions due to their proliferation of coal-fired power plants. The FAMS project clearly established that these coal burning countries, particularly China, are the ultimate sources of the major mercury deposition that was monitored at the sampling towers in the Florida Everglades.

On a side note, the colleague who discovered that the yellowish haze that frequently bothered the residents of Miami essentially originates from dust picked up by the trade winds crossing the Sahara Desert was Joe Prospero, who was my friend and collaborator when I was on the staff at the Rosenthal School of Marine and Atmospheric Science at the University of Miami.

I mentioned earlier that I was a member of the Electric Power Research Institute, whose headquarters was located in Palo Alto, California near San Francisco. At least once every year I attended conferences there where I met and established a professional relationship with Dr. Don Porcella, *an environmental scientist with the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI)*, who discovered that the addition of Limestone counteracts acid rain in freshwater lakes.

One conference that we were both scheduled to attend was to be held in Minamata, Japan, where the mercury poisoning issue originated. Of course, I was excited to visit Minamata and had tickets in hand ready to depart the morning of September 9th, 2001, when – literally – all hell broke loose. My FPL employer immediately cancelled all international flights for their employees. I was the only one out of our entire mercury scientific group whose attendance to the Minamata conference was cancelled.

Besides EPRI and an active member of FCG, I was appointed head of the Mercury Research and Appropriations Committee when we were asked by Tom Atkeson to help fund the mercury research multi agency effort which became known as the South Florida Mercury Science Project program which Atkeson was charged to organize and oversee. Since Tom was familiar with all the FCG members his pitch was simply, “money talks and bullshit walks”. I was instrumental in securing the funding from the SCG



member companies. Afterward, Tom confided in me that when he saw how easy it seemed, he wanted to kick his ass for not asking for more!

Throughout the mercury research program I worked closely with John Porcella from EPRI. He and I shared authorship on three published research papers. The final one was titled “respective study of mercury in raccoons in South Florida”. Long term

monitoring records of mercury in the environment are rare; Especially in relation to mercury in biota.

Because of the abundance and distribution of raccoon's museum samples and in present day environments of concern, this species was chosen as an archive that might reveal historic patterns of mercury exposure in South Florida. It was hypothesized that raccoons in South Florida may be a vector for mercury to the endangered Florida Panther. I led the trapping up and collecting hair samples from the raccoons throughout the area of concern, as well as collecting hair samples from museum archives.

I would be remiss if I failed to mention that the explosion of research would barely have been possible without the revolution in sampling and analyzing of mercury at ultra trace concentrations. This revolution was led principally by Dr. William Fitzgerald of the University of Connecticut and his then graduate students, Gary Gill and Nick Bloom, both of whom I interacted with in the South Florida Mercury Study. Their ultra trace mercury analytical techniques were picked up by Dr. Lian Liang of CEBAM Analytical Incorporated, a small company that *specializes in analysis for ultra-low detection of trace metals based in* Seattle, WA. Proficient in quantitatively determining the amount and species of mercury in a single quarter inch hair sample, Dr. Liang analyzed a total of 172 hair samples including all modern and all museum samples.

There were six major areas of sample collection, ranging from the 10,000 Islands and Chokoloskee in the West to the northern and central Florida Keys to the East and from Big Pine Key down to Flamingo in the Everglades National Park. These areas surrounded our main area of both modern and museum sampling and the Shark Valley Slough, (aka, Shark River Slough). This slough provides the primary natural drainage pathway for the Everglades from Lake Okeechobee through Everglades National Park and, ultimately, to Florida Bay.

The amount of mercury in the raccoon hair samples from the different areas generally correlated with the amounts in atmosphere deposition samples from the FAMS study which further verified that mercury and biota, including the Florida Panther believed to be killed from mercury toxicity came from the Southeast trade winds transporting the mercury from coal-burning power plants in Southeast Asia. Through extensive statistical treatment of the data, the primary hypothesis that mercury in raccoon hair had remained the same during the last 50 years in South Florida could not be rejected.

Although there were other results from this study, such as the effects of eating habits in the different areas, this essentially



completed my contribution to the toxic mercury issue in South Florida.

Regretfully, as with the toxic mercury issue, there continues to be little international agreement on ways – or even the will – to tackle the larger global problems, some catastrophic, such as climate change, overfishing, depletion of other resources, and overpopulation that we and our environment continue to face. When will it be too late?



TWIM

# THIS WEEK IN MYSOGINY

**By Lucinda Lugeons**



It's a good thing that the people of Tennessee have the Tennessee Medical Ethics Defense Act out there defending them from medical ethics. See, this is a law that was enacted in April of this year that allows doctors to deny coverage to patients based on the "I don't wanna" clause. Specifically, it "prohibits a healthcare provider from being required to participate in, or pay for, a healthcare procedure, treatment, or service that violates the conscience of the healthcare provider".

So, what does that look like in practice? Well, according to an

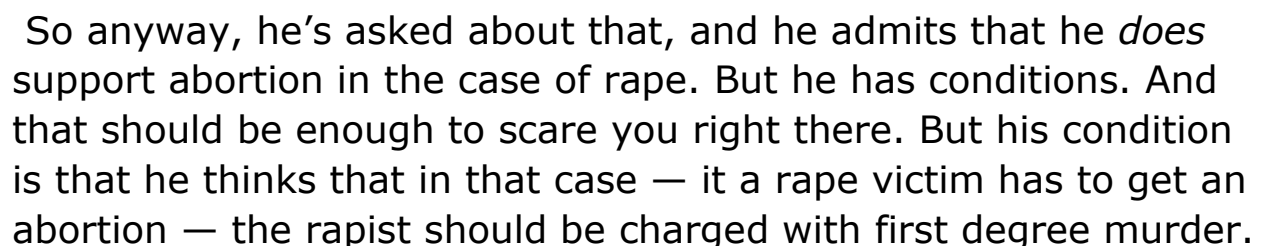
## NASHVILLE BANNER

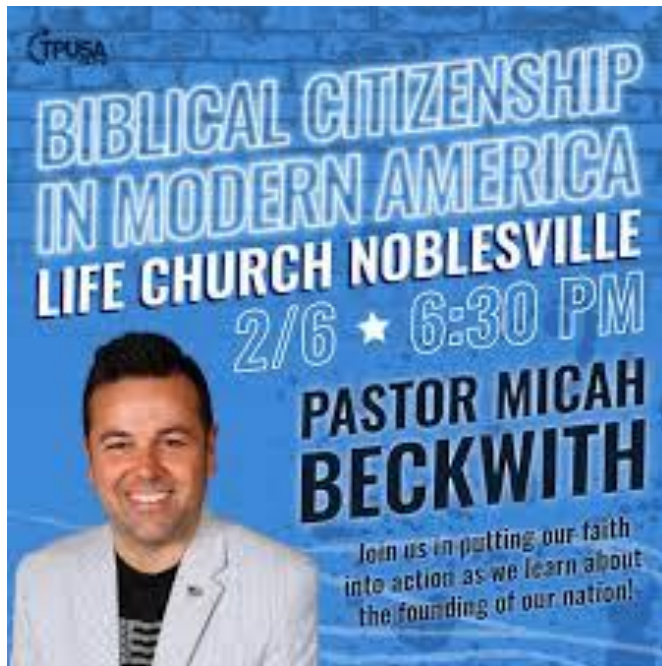
### Pregnant Mother in Tennessee Denied Care for Being Unmarried

*The 2025 Medical Ethics Defense Act allows physicians to deny care to patients whose lifestyles they disagree with*

anonymous woman speaking at a town hall meeting in Jonesborough, Tennessee, it looks like a doctor refusing her prenatal care because she was unmarried. She's been with her partner for 15 years. They have a 13-year-old kid together. But they have no intention of getting married. And so, under this bullshit law, it was perfectly legal for the doctor's office to refuse her treatment.

And speaking of shitty states along the 87th meridian west with misogynistic laws, I've got a story out of Indiana for you. See, they've got a Lieutenant Governor named Micah Beckwith who, when he's not Lieutenant Governing, is a far-right hate preacher. So anyway, earlier this month he did an interview with a local PBS affiliate, and during the interview a 17-year-old Indiana girl who was raped asked him if she could get an abortion because Indiana law forces her to carry the pregnancy to term.

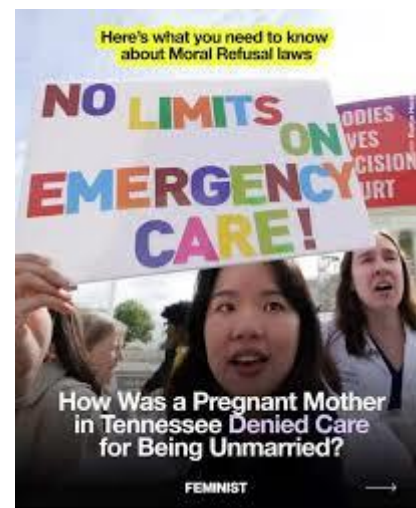




And look, if you know me at all, you know I'm not here to defend rapists. I'd be perfectly fine with the punishment for rape and the punishment for first degree murder to be equivalent. But you have to be careful around shit like this. This is a novel way of trying to box pro-abortion voices in by disguising your anti-abortion proposal as an anti-rape proposal. Hard to argue with

stiffening penalties for rape, isn't it? But any law that would equate abortion with murder is a dangerous concession to make, regardless of the immediate consequence. And beyond all that, it's a pretty fucked up admission that this asshole thinks a woman getting raped is a lesser crime than four undifferentiated cells getting flushed down a toilet.

And one last story before I let you go, for which we're gonna need a WAY different longitude. Because apparently China is freaking out a bit about a viral comedy routine about a woman who left her abusive husband. This comedian, who goes by Fangzhuren (sorry — I'm sure I'm mispronouncing that), does this whole routine about her abusive husband, and at the end she announces that she left him, and the whole club gets up and cheers and people have tears in their eyes. And clips of it go viral on Chinese social media. And apparently the people in power there don't like the idea of women feeling empowered to leave their abusive husbands. So, all of a



sudden, like — two days after that went viral, the Chinese government issues new guidelines for comedians and how they should address differences between the genders.



Now, the new guidelines don't mention Fangzhuren by name or refer to her routine directly, but from the reporting I'm seeing, there's no question about what this is in response to. And the new

guidelines are filled with instructions to be constructive when pointing out the differences in genders and not present jokes as though men and women are in opposition. It even offers helpful examples, like, "Instead of mocking 'blindly confident men' it is better to explore the social causes of this mentality". Sounds hilarious.

And look, I'm all for encouraging comedians to drop the whole "women be shopping" bullshit, but I find it damn telling that this concern for gendered stereotypes in comedy only shows up when men are the ones being stereotyped. And given that Stephen Colbert just got cancelled for criticizing Dear Leader, I feel like this story might be a little more relevant to American politics than most of us are ready to admit.



scathingatheist.com



# **Economic/Financial Armageddon is Coming**

**By David Dorenzo**

**I**t has been a rocky road for the United States since the election and insertion of its new president in January. This president has made many changes with the obvious desire to centralize and control the executive branch of government in his quest for autocratic power, which is mission accomplished in less than 6 months. He has now also bent the legislative branch to his will and is working on the judicial branch. At the moment he is seeking control of the ENTIRE VOTING PROCESS.

Much of what he has accomplished and continues to pursue undermines the government's ability to provide the services and funds for the basic social contract with the people who elected him.

Much more has cost the country its place as a world leader that provides some modicum of stability in world order. Our president has made it clear in both statement and deed that all past written agreements and unwritten understandings are renegotiable under the general label of "AMERICA FIRST". The US will no longer be a protector of democracy around the world or a reasonable and rational trading partner. The president's complete disdain for the

Rule of Law and the US Constitution has further discouraged the rest of the world from seeking further understandings, agreements or additional economic relationships with the US, unless forced to out of fear of the ramifications to their own country.

The tariffs that the president has put in place as he simultaneously attempts to remove anywhere between 11 and 15 million immigrants may well result in inflation from both increased prices and shortages. When combined with a round of cuts to many social services and economic help to the disadvantaged, the country may experience simultaneous recession with inflation.



Donald Trump with the help of his enablers is single handedly destroying the US economy and chasing away investors from around the world. This can (and inevitably will) happen if Trump continues with his current and unpredictable policies of tariffs and immigrant removal. The economic effects will be devastating.

Since November I have thought about the terrible decision American Voters have made electing Donald Trump as President. I have wrung my hands at how much damage he could do to this country and the world over the next 2 and 4 years. He has already exceeded my expectations. He has made the country,

and the world fear him. He has conjured up so many sycophants and true believers that the irrationality of it all has me in a state of disbelief. How could so many people be so uniformed or, more harshly, *neanderthally* ignorant? Why is this happening? More recently I have pondered the question – *can he be stopped and how?*

### THERE IS HOPE

**M**y background and education are in finance and economics. Lately I have been reading in remote places in financial publications about something that is starting to occur now and will continue to negatively impact the US economy. Something that Donald Trump will not be able to control and could put a stop to many of his actions.



Unfortunately, it may also be very harmful to the country. None the less it should ultimately rid us of Trump and his MAGA types and provide us an opportunity to preserve our Democracy. The country and its voters will not stand for the devastating economic consequences, and he will be blamed. Ultimately, it will help elect a Democratic Congress in 2026 and a Democratic President in 2028 ... *if we still have free and fair elections.*

What Mr. Trump is doing with tariffs to the rest of the world and with immigrant removal and destruction of government social programs at home is unconstitutional without congressional approval and court acquiescence. But neither has been willing nor able to uphold the checks and balances provided to them. He has taken control of both the Congressional and Judicial branches of government that were intended to check the Executive branch. In fact, Mr. Trump has already established himself as an autocrat.

#### HOWEVER

**S**ince the end of the 2nd World War US Govt. Debt along with American Dollars have been purchased and held by governments and financial institutions around the world. For the past 70+ years the US dollar and Govt. Securities have been considered the gold standard as the US has grown to be the largest economy and most powerful military in the world. It has also been respected for its *adherence to the rule of law* and defender of democracy around the world. This elevated status has also elevated the US currency as a payment standard for international trade all over the world and US Govt. Debt as a virtually risk-free investment.

Many banks and other financial institutions around the world hold significant reserves and investments in US dollars and debt. These same financial institutions along with investors are heavily





invested in the US stock market and public bond market. Europe alone has \$3 trillion invested in US stocks.

### NOT ANYMORE

**R**euters publication has been reporting that the world has been a net seller of both US Govt. securities and dollars since our dear leader, Donald Trump has been in office. Here is some anecdotal evidence.

The US dollar has lost approximately 8 percent of value against the world basket of currencies and interest rates on US Govt. longer term debt have increased by ½ percent.

When Banks were asked about why replacing dollar and dollar investments with gold and Euros, the answer was that the United States is a divided country, not as stable as it once was.



Other anecdotal information from various sources within the past 60 days:

- China has recently sold \$500 million of US debt securities.
- More international trade recently is being conducted in other currencies, more notably in the Euro.
- More recently Central Banks around the world are dumping US Treasuries and buying gold.
- Banks have reduced dollar currency reserves by 8 percent and now hold less than 50 percent.

This selling or liquidation of US securities and dollars is likely to continue and continue to force reductions in demand for US currency and debt forcing further currency depreciation and interest rate increases. On August 6 Reuters reported:

- DOLLAR: index falls 0.5 percent in value, its fourth straight decline.
- BONDS: A weak 10-year Treasury auction pushes longer-dated yields up as much as 5 bps (*base points*), steepening the yield curve.

On August 7 the US Treasury auctioned US government securities and Reuters reported the following; "Thursday's auction of 30-year bonds found buyers to be less enthusiastic than expected, triggering a modest uptick in yields across most of the maturity spectrum, although shorter-maturity securities saw their yields decline while longer-dated notes and bonds saw their yields rise (resulting in a slightly steeper yield curve). To that end, the yield



on the benchmark 10-year and the long-dated 30-year both experienced 4 basis point upticks to 4.27 percent and 4.85 percent, respectively."

On August 13 Reuters reported that global non-US equity funds received an inflow of \$13.6 billion while US Funds experienced an outflow of \$6.3 billion for the month of July, the fourth straight

month of redemptions. The causes cited were unresolved trade policy and persistent uncertainty about policy. Anticipated growth prospects are expected almost anywhere else.

Earlier this year S & P (Standard & Poor), the premiere credit rating agency reduced the U. S. credit rating, from A to A- because of its increasing national debt. A total national debt at \$34 trillion and growing at an unsustainable level was the rating agencies explanation. It did not find Donald Trump's one *big, beautiful spending bill* to be such. Trump's bill is estimated to add another 4 trillion to the national debt over the next 10 years.

One can conclude that the world's continued divestment of American dollars, Govt. and other public securities will continue to decline and the prices of all that is imported will increase. The disinvestment of U S Govt. debt securities will increase interest



rates and at some point, require the U S to retrench its deficit spending.

The effects on average person will be some serious inflation, from both the tariffs and depreciation of the dollar, and higher interest rates to borrow money for things like homes, cars and anything it consumes, particularly if it is imported.

The whole point of the tariffs is to attract manufacturing to the US, but until corporations can see some stability in the rules and in the size and continuation of the tariffs there is little likelihood that the US will see that investment. If and when it does it will take several years before there will be any benefits from it.

## WHY INFLATION, RECESSION, AND POSSIBLE DEPRESSION!

**T**he depreciation of the dollar along with the tariffs, and a shortage of almost every manufactured product will result in inflation.

The sale of the Dollar and US Govt. securities by the rest of the world will continue reduce its value and push up rates to secure willing takers at some price.

The failure in the short run to recreate production facilities for the products that were tariffed will leave this country nothing to show for the pain of consumers and businesses.



Many of the tariffed nations will not be able to deliver on the negotiated promises to remove barriers to U. S. exports or to buy the promised quotas of American goods or invest in production facilities in the U. S. leading to a constant renegotiation of tariffs.

With increasing long term rates for domestic consumers and business expansion all interest rates for autos, homes, and business loans will discourage all expansion.



At some level of US Govt. debt, the international debt markets will demand a stop in our huge deficit spending before providing any further debt financing. In the interim the Govt. will have to raise taxes or reduce spending on everything else. When any or all of these events occurs, a Depression is assured.

**It's odd that it's  
always framed that  
other countries  
"stole" American  
jobs, and not that the  
ultra wealthy shipped  
our jobs away for a  
quick buck.**

#### AND FINALLY

**T**here have been two further indications of what we can expect in the future. When Trump threatened that he was unhappy with the Chairman of the Federal Reserve, Jerome Powell, for failing to reduce the short-term discount rate, interest rates on longer term US Govt. and threatened to replace him, interest rates on US Govt. debt jumped immediately. Within a matter of days Mr. Trump stated that no, he would not make that replacement. I believe that he understood that he had to yield to market forces or rates on all new debt and debt that required renewal would be subject to those higher rates along with a tsunami of US debt that would be sold on the secondary markets pushing rates even higher. Trump was stopped by the bond market from firing Jerome Powell. None the less Mr. Powell's term as Chairman expires in May of 2026 and should Trump replace him with a loyalist, or yes man, the bond market will react the same way.

Recently Jeffrey Gundlach, leader of a group of Bond Experts named the “Bond Vigilantes” and considered the “King of Bonds” sat for an interview with Bloomberg News. He commented that US Govt. Bonds are no longer considered the standard of excellence. He further advised that US Govt. or US bonds in general should be avoided as an investment and recommended foreign investment and suggested European markets would fare better over the longer term. He insinuated that the growth of the deficit and Trump policies are not sustainable over the longer term.

No president or his party has or will retain power in the economic mess that Trump’s policies is about to create.



# THE WAY WE WERE



The people who threw rocks at Ruby Bridges for trying to go to school **are now upset their grandchildren might learn about them throwing rocks at Ruby Bridges.**

Some of those people who threw rocks are **STILL** alive... **and so is Ruby Bridges.**

**LET ALL THAT SINK IN.**





# Uncle Blackie

By James  
Longo

When I was a kid, I wanted to be my Uncle Blackie. His real name was Jimmy, but they

called Blackie because he was the Black sheep of the family.

The story goes that Blackie had a twin sister, My Aunt Barbara. When they were teens, they had a joint checking account. My Aunt put the money in. My Uncle took the money out. One day, he emptied the account and ran away to California. I know he paid her back. These people would stop talking over a non-returned hammer. I couldn't imagine the war over a bank account.

My Uncle was the consummate entrepreneur. This guy was broke six times and rich seven. His son, Little Jimmy, once told me, "My father can make two thousand dollars a day and spend three. He started as a barber, and probably could have made a living doing that, but he had dreams of making it big."

Uncle Blackie bought a bum hotel with a bar and restaurant on the first floor. The previous owner held the mortgage. It was directly across from Chicopee's City Hall. It was filled with disabled vets on Social Security disability. My uncle would run a tab for everyone, for the hotel, the restaurant, and the bar, and on the first of the month, he'd collect all their checks. Most were



alcoholics, and the tabs were probably equal to the check. He was on his way.

The story goes that he got a good deal on winter heating fuel and stored it on the fifth floor of his hotel.



Maybe one of the bums was upstairs smoking. Maybe there was a short in the seventy-year-old wiring; needless to say, the top three floors burned down. No one was hurt ... fortunately. I remember my uncle saying on the evening news that there wasn't any insurance on the building. If there was, I wouldn't have put it past my uncle to have facilitated the situation.

Uncle Blackie tore off what was left of the top three floors, leaving a two-story building. On the second floor, he put a billiards room and bar and partnered with a Polish kid from the neighborhood. It's probably still there today. On the first floor, he put a nightclub called *The Center of Town* with name-brand acts. The club was popping it for a while, until someone got killed at the club. Shot to be exact. For some reason, people don't want to party where people die. So much for *The Center of Town*.

Did my Uncle Blackie give up? Never. He made a candlepin bowling alley out of the nightclub. He bought used candle-pin bowling machines. The last



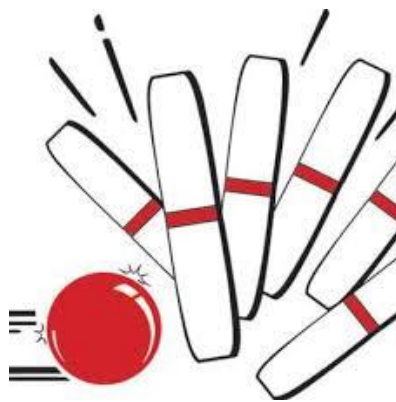
candlepin machines were built in the 1950s, and this was the 1980s. Everything went gangbusters. It was a big hit. He was making money hand over fist until the machines started to break down. It turns out the reason he got those machines so cheap was that there were no replacement parts. So, he cannibalized machine one to keep machine two

running, before he knew it, he had a three-alley bowling alley. Do you see a pattern?

He became a general contractor and built a couple of spec houses. He started making money again, but the Fed raised interest rates to 18% and the housing market went to the devil.

He opened a chain of pizzerias in low-income neighborhoods, and he started making good money for a while, but then they started to get robbed. Granny, who worked at one of his pizzerias, had a gun put to her head. Needless to say, he closed them all.

Uncle Blackie once told me the easiest way to get rich in America was to get a government contract, and that is what he did. Due to the hotel being across the street from Chicopee City Hall, he got to know everyone and landed the concession contract for the Chicopee Municipal Golf Course. That lasted twelve years until the mayor failed to get reelected.



Somewhere along the way, I stopped wanting to be my uncle. I couldn't scheme that well. I couldn't 'not give up' that often. I couldn't owe everybody and their brother. I couldn't gamble every day that way, where what I knew was right and the world was wrong.



He died on my birthday in 2008. By then, I thought of him as a lazy, conniving fool, but after writing this, I can see why he was my childhood hero. He never gave up. Don't ever give up.



I just discovered my Microsoft "Word" program has added an AI component application titled, "CoPilot". Did I need it? Did I want it? Will I use it? Will Microsoft force me to use it? I doubt I will ever use it but unfortunately, I fear many people will. It could be they doubt their imaginations, or it could also be that their imaginations scare them.

Well, I am not scared. Not of my imagination nor of AI's non imagination. What happened was, I decided to test it. Kind of like when I was a kid and tested my father's bourbon when I broke into his liquor cabinet.

I had it in my mind to write about my experiences as a Vacation Bible School student. It occurred to me to go ahead and present my idea about VBS to the AI program. AI's opening paragraph was an excellent beginning ... It assumed an upbeat presupposition, ideal if you were a kiss-ass which, I am decidedly not!

The program asked me to "describe what you'd like to write" about, so I typed in Vacation Bible School Adventures and hit return. In less than a minute, just a short pause, I had over 1200 words of sing-song drivel. Accurate drivel but drivel, nonetheless. Positively soulless. It started out like this:

# Vacation Bible School Adventures

JOURNEYING THROUGH FAITH, FRIENDSHIP, AND FUN.



*(AND NOWHERE NEAR REALITY!)*

The opening paragraph: (Quote)

Every summer, as the days grow longer and the warmth of the sun beckons children outdoors,

communities across the world

prepare for a tradition that weaves

together the threads of faith, fun, and fellowship: Vacation Bible School (VBS). For many, the words "Vacation Bible School" evoke images of colorful crafts, enthusiastic singing, and stories that sparkle with meaning. But beyond the banners and bustling activities lies a tapestry of adventures — moments of discovery, laughter, and transformation that leave lasting imprints on young hearts. (Unquote)

I wanted to throw up after reading that opening paragraph. It maintained that insipid attitude throughout the treatise. I thought of course, that is how AI is going to compose nouns, adjectives and verbs. Just like every young, upwardly mobile, management trainee wants their office memos to sound, read and communicate with their boss. Just like the one business English composition course I skipped over. I called it, "How to write soulless marketing mimicry".

I didn't want business English. I wanted vivid English. I wanted the English I had enjoyed, the English that made me tingle, the English I wanted to write, to have substance. I started reading authors like Sinclair Lewis, James Joyce, John Steinbeck, Lillian Hellman, Jack Kerouac and, especially, Henry Miller.



Miller's narratives were full of living and sweat and the unexpected. Purity was disdained, perfection was a lie and lust was elevated to holy. It seemed like a flawless match for my adolescent perpetual erection.



The first time I read Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* was on a bus ride from Downtown Kansas City to the suburb where I lived. I was a tall 14-year-old and had been on a shopping trip to prepare for my freshman year in high school. I not only purchased shirts and slacks, I went to a bookstore called "Time to Read", a place that had everything from *Wall Street Journal* to *New York Times* to Al Goldstein's trashy, newsprint-tabloid, porno-magazine, *Screw*. I bought all the porn I thought I could smuggle into my room at home.

I had a paper sack stuffed with copies of skin mags like *Dude*, *Gent* and *Playboy* that mixed in with *Car & Driver*, *Sports Illustrated* and *Newsweek*. When I was checking out the clerk asked if there was anything else I wanted. There was a stack of Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* paperbacks on the counter. It was an infamous novel that had been banned in the United States for years. I tossed a copy on the magazines I had selected and said, "Always wanted to read this."

I wasn't carded. There was no ID check to determine if I was old enough. On the contrary, if you were tall enough to put your money on the counter, the world of adult literature was yours at "Time to Read".



I read as many pages of *Tropic* as I could during the trip from downtown. It wasn't easy reading. It was confusing to a 14-year-old kid. What did Miller mean when he wrote about the passion he felt for a woman, "Ah Mara, I

want to bite into your cunt and spit out two Franc pieces." (Franc pieces because the novel was set in France I later discovered.)

That sounded so dirty, that sounded so intimate. That sounded so fucking real. I certainly didn't understand it then. A few years later, after I had experienced more life, I read the novel again. It took me away. I felt and tasted every word of Miller's humid account. If I tried hard, I could almost smell it.

The bus dropped me off at a mall where I met my mother, very careful to conceal my porno treasure by showing off my school clothing selections. "Nice shirt, huh, mom?"

About this time, you might be asking what my adolescent excursions had to do with Vacation Bible School. Well, I hated Vacation Bible School. I yearned to be on the baseball diamond, instead. Or downtown at the arcade that had privacy booths way in the back, that you could see a strip tease for a quarter a reel. Anything rather than sitting in a group praying to wash away my most intimate sins.

Of course, I didn't realize at the time that VBS was intense indoctrination. Sure, Jesus was my pal, my friend but I hid a lot of who I was away from Jesus. The people at VBS just thought I was shy.

But VBS was all planned out. They had pre-printed biblical artwork we could color with crayons of the lessons of Cain and Abel (murder), Moses with the 10 Commandments (obedience), Shadrack, Meshack and Abenego in the fiery furnace and Daniel in the Lion's den (faith) among other stories. I was struck by how viciously nasty god was to poor old Job, the picture of him with dripping boils repulsed me. I suspected, even at that age, that there was something funny going on between King Saul's son, Prince Jonathan, and the shepherd boy, David. Isaac and Abraham gave me the willies. I asked my father, "Dad, if God told you to, would you kill me?" I never saw him look so perplexed.

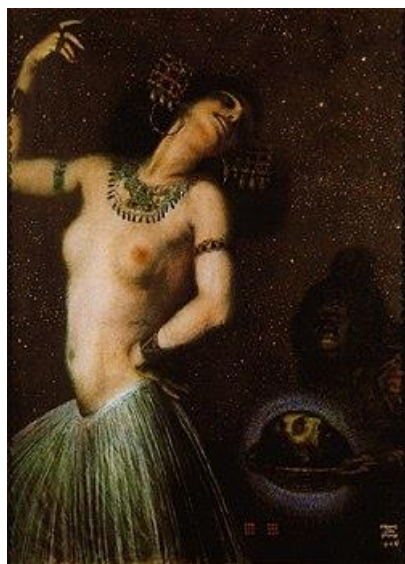


**THE SCARY MOMENT WHEN YOU REALIZE YOUR CHRISTIAN DAD WOULD KILL YOU IF HIS IMAGINARY FRIEND TOLD HIM TO.**

On the plus side, I had prurient thoughts of Samson with Delilah, barren wives and fruitful handmaidens, wondering just what the hell had happened when the virgin Mary was impregnated. My hyper-thyroid mind said, I bet she had a big one, whatever a big one could have been. The cartoonish line-art drawing VBS provided portrayed the moment as mystical, a totally holy orgasm, a beatific Mary, eyes closed as a horny entity swirled over, around and through her. Was it consensual or was it ... rape?

My most vivid memory of the stories that impressed me at VBS was the one of the teenaged Salome erotically dancing before her horny stepfather and Judean King, Herod Antipas, arousing him so much that he promised her anything up to and including half his kingdom for a little taste of her "talent".

She asked for and got, the head of John the Baptist, who had pissed off Salome's mother Herodias by calling her something like



a whore; like Hamlet called Gertrude in Shakespeare's play 1600 years later. I wondered if Shakespeare got the idea for the plot when he went to VBS.

Salome asked her mother, Herodias, "mommy what do you want for your birthday?"

"The head of John the Baptist!" Growled Herodias. Obviously, Salome was very obedient to her mother.

My active imagination saw Salome as Debra Paget, a young Hollywood actress popular for her physical beauty (Elvis Presley called Paget "the most beautiful girl in the world" but Debra's mother would not allow them to date) and I often dreamt that summer, of her dancing for me like the nymph in Franz von Stuck's 1906 painting of a sultry, bare-breasted Salome which I had found in a carefully hidden book of art locked into a cabinet next to the liquor one.

Lithe and supple, Paget was a divine goddess in sword and sandal epic dramas like *Princess of the Nile*, *Demetrius and the Gladiators*, *The Tiger of Eschnapur* and *The Indian Tomb* where her costume appeared to be barely pasted onto her strategic areas. It saddens me that few people remember Paget. I guess the reality of delivering her lines like a wooden mannequin overshadowed her delightfully glorious body. I do admit that I defiled my sheets more than once that year.

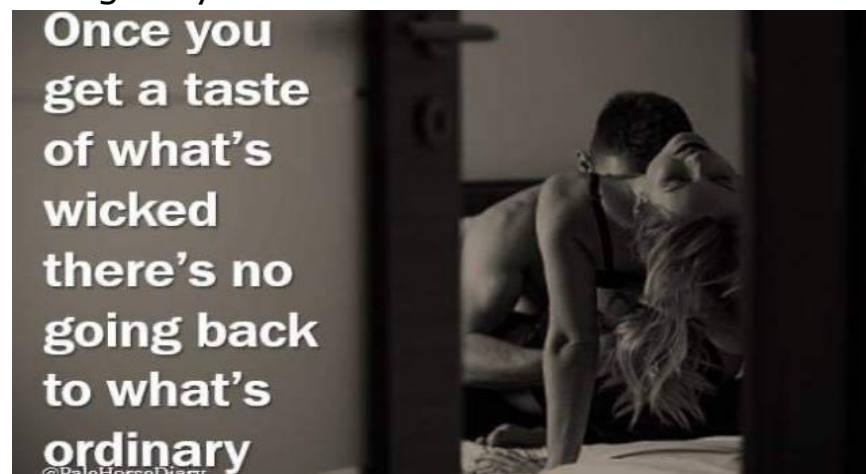


The weird part of VBS were the people in charge. Believers all, they had a fervor like all intense cult followers. From the ardent



leaders of the futile 1212 Children's Crusade intending to free the Holyland from the Muslims, Euro-children Stephen of Cloyes and Nicholas of Cologne, to David Koresh, the Branch Davidian martyr and his unfortunate followers in Waco Texas, their belief was tragically unshakeable. One of the VBS teachers was a carpenter who, years before, had clumsily cut off his index finger while making cabinets on a table saw. He talked about finding his severed digit in the bloody saw dust. "I know when I die and go to heaven, I am going to get that finger back," he declared piously as he displayed his quivering stub to the room full of retching 10-year-olds.

Was VBS an adventure for me? In a perverse way, yes. Even though my heart was on the baseball diamond, playing second



base, I was affected by what I was exposed to. There was the sex and violence of the Old Testament, there was the charming promises contained in the Sermon on the

Mount in the New. And I remember very much wanting to believe all of it. I don't remember how many times I was told – threatened, really – that wicked, impure thoughts would condemn me to hell. That part, I never forgot, and I wondered how they knew.

It was a moment of epiphany when I saw what CoPilot had created in *Vacation Bible School Adventures*. I wondered, *is this what AI really is?* Is this what we can expect for the future? I cannot really argue with it. I experienced all that AI described and a little more (It wasn't until we stepped up from VBS to

Catechism classes that we raided the church's kitchen for the Mogen David communion wine).

AI will make indoctrination a fun thing. Objectively clean and boring. And that is bad. It is untruthful. You could call it a lie. I wondered where, in the AI version of VBS, were the disgusting parts? The murders, the rapes, the greed, the nauseating circumcisions? VBS skipped those parts. AI skipped those parts, too.

CoPilot concluded with this suspect summation of the experience:

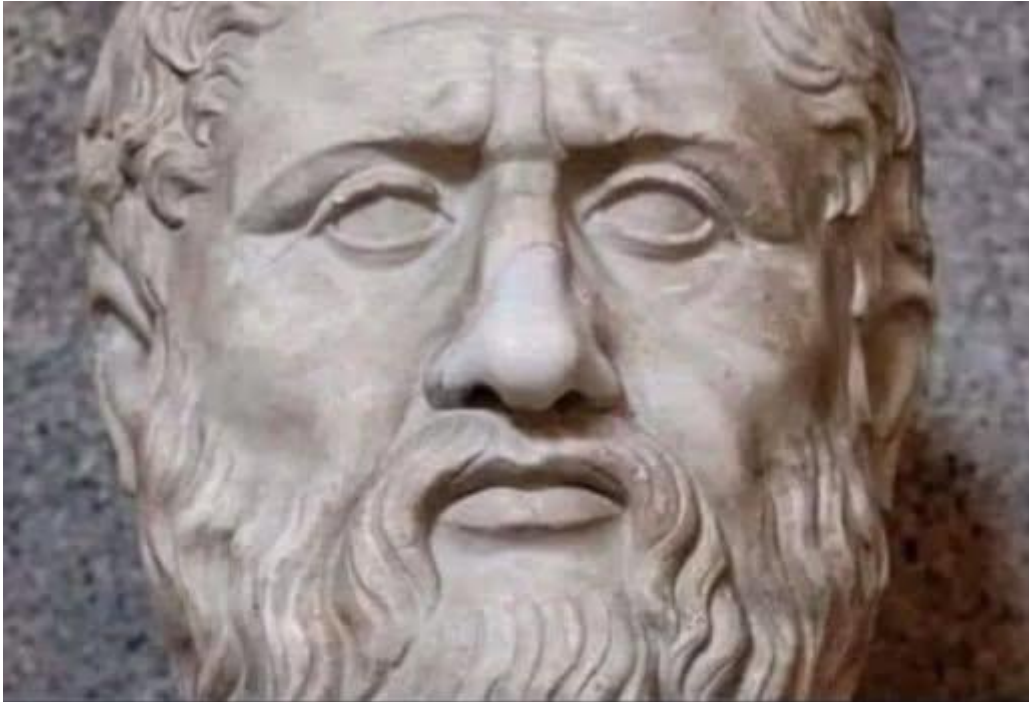
*(Quote) The Enduring Magic of VBS*

*Vacation Bible School adventures are stories of joy, discovery, and transformation. They are the laughter of a hundred children singing together, the quiet moments of reflection under painted stars, and the bonds that form over shared snacks and silly games. They are the legacy of faith, handed from one generation to the next through open doors, friendly smiles, and boundless imagination. (Unquote)*

Again, I wanted to throw up at AI's slick disingenuousness. It is like some marketing guy wrote a poetic advertisement for a wonderful, picture-perfect canoeing vacation in the Canadian north woods. It is a pretty portrait of nature but it is all from a distance. There is no sweltering heat. There is no bone-chilling cold. There is no mention of the sucking mud. There is no mention of the clouds of B-52 sized blood-slurping mosquitos. There is no reality. There is no imagination. There is no joy like biting into a cunt and spitting out two Franc pieces.



# FICTION



*"Tolerance is the lube that helps  
slip the dildo of dysfunction into  
the ass of a civilized society."*

*— Plato*



What a glorious morning it was. Sparse enough clouds muting the shadows from the oak trees, with a light breeze helping to cool us down from the 80-degree heat.

The flowering trees were blossoming in the sunlit spring air. Johnny was so happy to have been chosen to run this business. His prior experiences were with generationally owned stores, but the owners of this location had tragically lost their only son, David, who had been Johnny's closest friend.

Johnny and David started being best friends in college, sharing several dorm rooms and houses. Their first house was just a half block up from the main drag, and had a large front porch, with a 4 by 8 plywood sign that proudly read, "Go to Hell ALABAMA".

It was nice to be closer to home, near enough to the mountains, even if it did entail living in Stuartsboro.

As Johnny walked briskly toward the side entrance, he grabbed his key, unlocked the door, and entered the alarm code.



Out back, the shop was already humming with activity, bead blasters whispering their presence, power tools hummed, and garage doors squeaked while opening and closing.

Dale walked in and greeted Johnny as if they had been friends for years. In fact, Johnny and Dale had imbibed a few beers with David. The trio had camped at Bald River Falls, rafted the Nantahala, and watched the synchronous fireflies in Cades Cove.

It seemed that this was, indeed, going to be a glorious day in glorious Stuartsboro.

Larry, a smooth-faced boy, looked like he might have been a high school athlete gone to hell and back. When his head turned, his flappy jowls would catch up and shudder a bit. He asked them to come out to the back for something.

They chatted about their dogs, their women, and teen pranks, everything was nice. They came to the long-closed gas station behind the main building, on the back street. There was a biker gang out back, but it drove off as the men rounded the corner.

Larry cranked open a rusty garage door. As it rose, shards of its broken windows tinkled onto the greasy floor below. Disorganized piles of old oil cans, shop rags, and rain-soaked boxes were piled and scattered all over the place. The stench of oil, dirt, and grease reminded Johnny of such a station in Sweetwater, his hometown a couple of hours north.

Grease and oil impregnated the dirt and gravel around the concrete pads where the gas pumps had once sat. There was no hydraulic lift for oil changes or suspension work, just a ten foot long, six-foot deep trench for cars to drive over after the mechanic laddered down into the abyss. From this even oilier-soaked trench, mechanics would reach up to pull the oil drain plug.

The smooth-faced kid, Larry, fumbled to open the inner door. It was much worse inside rather than outside the building. Piles of



worn-out car parts lay, forming a narrow grease-sodden maze that led to a ladder.

Without warning, the smooth-faced kid punched Johnny in the nose several times. Intermittent jabs to the cheeks and chin were followed by shoving and tripping. The morning and the world went topsy-turvy!

Larry yelled at the astonished Johnny. "We got you now, you sumbitch! You ain't runnin' from this. We kilt the last uns."

Johnny reeled back, but was not in pain, in shock maybe, but no pain, and little fear. He did not understand why he seemed to feel nothing, or even why he was not terrified.

Johnny glanced left and right for a weapon, maybe a tire iron or something.

All of a sudden, there was another barrage of punches. The biker gang had come back. Johnny raised his arms in defense from his attackers one of the bikers, a stinky, hairy one stepped between them and gruffly asked, "Do you want to live, asshole?"



Always the jokester, Johnny almost quipped a smart-assed comment, but hesitated before asking, "What the Hell do you guys think I did?" Looking around, Johnny noticed that his old friend Dale was long gone, and he was all alone.

The oily, greasy, and very smelly Duck Dynasty-reject, ZZ Top looking biker grabbed Johnny's head with two burly hands, like a vise and repeated, "Do you want to live asshole?"

"Of course I do. I also want to know what you think I did."

"Shut yer pie hole weirdo and climb that fuckin' ladder."

Johnny's eyes followed the ladder rungs up to a second-floor window, about 7 feet tall. The upper half was missing the pane of glass, while the lower pane was encrusted with dirt, oil, and grease, like everything else around there. His gaze went back to the ZZ Top-looking reject.

Smooth Face's eyes were popping out of his head as he screamed, "Climb it or die!"

Johnny put his foot on the first rung, then demanded, "Tell me what I have done or said, now!"

ZZ Duck Face yelled, "Climb to the top and stand on that there winder' ledge."

Johnny looked up and politely asked, "What ledge?"

ZZ Duck Face yelled, "The brick sill, you dumbass."

Johnny climbed up and carefully stepped onto the ledge. The window frame took up a lot of the ledge and he had to push on the upper frame to steady himself. It felt silly, but he could stand there, at least by occasionally swapping hands and keeping his feet splayed out. The ladder was removed.

The only Black person Johnny had ever seen in Stuartsboro stuck his head around the corner and ominously yelled, "You're a goner now, honky" then disappeared for good.

Smooth-Face smirked and yelled, "Take all yer clothes off and sing. Sing that Volunteer fight song you played on trumpet when you visited from college."

Johnny asked again what he had done or said, "Do you think I'm the one that got your sister pregnant?"

Smooth Face snarled, "Mention my sister agin, and I'll start a-throwin' tie rods at yer dumb ass. Strip bitch!"

Johnny thought, *I don't know about anyone else, but undressing while pressing up on a window frame to keep from falling looks like a real challenge.*

ZZ Dynasty Duck Face yelled, "Sing while you strip, pig fucker."

Well, since Johnny knew he had never screwed a pig, he took that as an analogy, wondering, *Did I screw someone he knows?*

Total confusion overwhelmed him. Johnny wondered, *what to sing? Fight Vols Fight, or a famous stripper melody.* He chose the latter and tried to amuse the crowd. "*Da-da-da Dit-da-da-da ...*"

*Damn, what crowd?* he thought. "Wait a minute, where did all these people come from?"

Somehow a half-filled bleacher appeared in the background, outside the garage door and across the narrow back street.





Visible in the bleachers were a couple of dozen varsity team jackets along with the biker colors, about equally divided between Alabama, Auburn and the Stuartsboro Pagans. Still, he continued with the stripper song, fervently hoping that a bit of amusement might warrant the return of the ladder.

Using his right arm to steady himself, he reached down and removed his left shoe and sock, all the while *a cappella* singing the carnival stripper song. He swapped hands for the right pair. "*Dit-da-dit-da.*" Next to go was the buttoned shirt. Then with a bit more dexterity, his tee shirt. "*Dit-da-dit-da Da-da-dit-da.*" Each item of clothing was tossed toward the bleachers, with an occasional bleacher Stuartsboro Pagan biker guy running down to snatch it out of the air. His belt was next and finally his pants. This was going to be a bit harder, so he moaned and hummed the Russian Dirge, *Volga*, "*Da-da-de-da, da-de-da-da-da-dit-da*" in the deepest voice he could muster.

A second Duck Man yelled from the bleachers, "Sing the Vols song for us-n's in the bleachers."

Johnny tried, but he suddenly went mute. No sound would come out. He felt like Ian Anderson in his later years, here a part of a word, then silence, and then another part of a word. All while standing on a narrow windowsill like a one-legged flute player.

Johnny let his jeans fall, prompting a few bleacher guys to rush out and wrestle for them, with the winner joyously running back. He held the wallet up for all to see.

Now was the most embarrassing part, the underwear. Johnny had a Trumpan, mushroom-like penis, and was not very happy to display it to anyone, much less these freaks. It was very white and very stubby. He had been on the ladder way too long to claim it was cold swimming pool water that had affected his short-armed Cremini.

For some silly reason, he had donned three pairs of underwear that day. Usually, he only wore his boxers over boxer-briefs.

The crowd roared, suspecting something was amiss in this show. Was he not going to be pushed off the ladder like the last few victims?

Well, here he was, stark naked, with arms tiring, about to fall off the ledge. What a way to go. Did this crowd really come for this? What could possibly follow now?

ZZ Dynasty Duck Face looked up as he brought over the ladder.

Johnny felt much better, thinking that he had just gone through some redneck initiation, ala the Red-Lead ball-painting of union electricians on huge jobs.

Johnny spent two summers bending 4-inch conduit for the electricians. He had witnessed what was called, "red-leading", so-called because of the lead-based, red paint that is used to seal the screw-on connectors for the vast expanses of conduit that would be concreted over. Teams of electricians would catch a new recruit, one team holding him down while the other team painted his testicles. Hardly anyone was exempt, even the big boss, the general foreman. In fact, Johnny had witnessed such with his own father, who, when confronted, simply dropped his drawers, grabbed the brush and painted his scrotum his own self.

Johnny sighed with relief when he remembered that he had escaped such an initiation. He was beginning to feel better about this one.



Fortunately or unfortunately, Johnny was in between dreams and reality when Smooth Face screamed, "There's a bus coming down the road in twenty minutes. Be on it and never return to Stuartsboro!"

Puzzled, Johnny asked, "What about my clothes and stuff?"

ZZ Duck Face man answered, "We'll get rid of it."

Johnny insisted, "What about my wallet? I need a bus ticket."

ZZ Duck Face taunted, "Be on the bus, or climb the ladder for your last rites," and thrust a bus ticket at him.

Johnny approached first person consciousness. *I came to my senses, realizing that this had really been happening to me. I carefully reached for the ladder as Duck Brains walked toward me with it. I firmly grasped it, but Duck Face yanked it back, pulling me off of the ledge. He steadied the ladder while loud huge clapping and laughing noises came from the bleachers.*

Johnny shrieked loudly, *"Whatever you think I did, I promise you I did not. You all only want to hide the fact that either you did it yourself, want to do it, or plan to do it, just like the preachers and politicians who try to hide their sins."*

Duck-for-brains let go of the ladder, causing loud clapping and laughing noises from the bleachers. The ladder wobbled as

Johnny tried to balance and walk it back toward the window. He failed dramatically.

His thoughts became more personal and immediate: *I was not only falling, but I was heading directly toward the large bolts that had, at one time, secured the gas pumps.*

At this time, he became a bit more aware of his predicament, but he could not let this nightmare end unresolved. He imagined holding out his arms to cushion himself.

He yelled a second time, *"Whatever you all think I did, I didn't. You only think it because you either did it, want to do it, or plan to do it yourself!"*

ZZ Duck Face sternly warned, "Git on down the road or else."

Johnny began to awaken to a drowsy state. Did he have to really dream all of that, just to keep from waking to pee? Had he slept through this because he really needed the sleep? His bladder insisted he fully arise. He was still under a state of emergency and rushed toward the bathroom, not yet quite awake, thinking, *"It's a good thing I needed to pee before I hit the ground, and being stabbed by those ominous bolts."*

But now he was fully awake and headed out. Out to the bathroom to pee. A sudden thought occurred to him, *"maybe we should paint the White House ... **black**!?!?"*





# POETRY

**No man in the history of EVER  
has closed out a letter to  
another man with, 'May every  
day be another wonderful  
secret,' unless they're secretly  
in love or they do some  
seriously f\*cked up sh\*t  
together.**



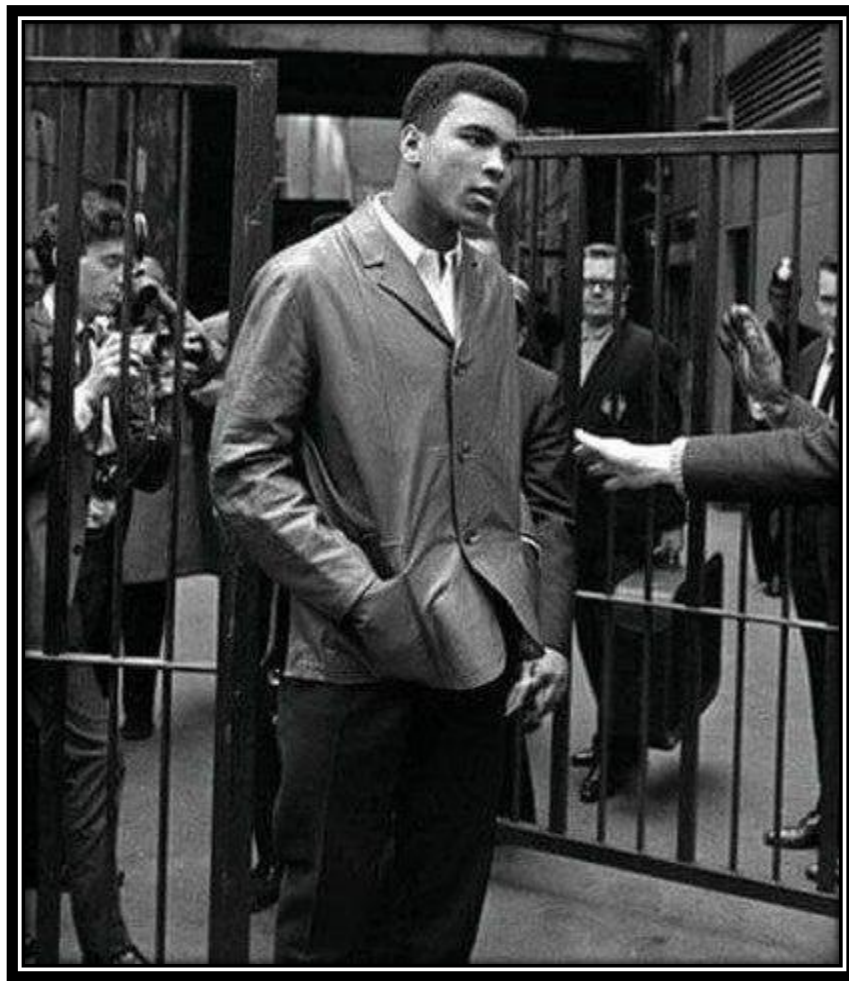
“I ain’t draft dodging. I ain’t burning no flag. I ain’t running to Canada. I’m staying right here.

You want to send me to jail? Fine, you go right ahead. I’ve been in jail for 400 years. I could be there for 4 or 5 more, but I ain’t going no 10,000 miles to help murder and kill other poor people.

If I want to die, I’ll die right here, right now, fightin’ you, if I want to die. You my enemy, not no Chinese, no Vietcong, no Japanese. You my opposer when I want freedom. You my opposer when I want justice. You my opposer when I want equality.

Want me to go somewhere and fight for you? You won’t even stand up for me right here in America, for my rights and my religious beliefs. You won’t even stand up for me right here at home. “

- Muhammad Ali





As I observed the Earth, I realized my home is a small planet, one of nine in the Solar System. It is just a mere speck in our Milky Way galaxy and lost to oblivion in the universe.

I began to question my own existence. How do I fit into what I see? Then I remembered a saying I often heard: "I hope I go to Heaven when I die." I suddenly realized that I went to Heaven when I was born! I arrived on a planet with the proper mass to have the gravity to contain water and an atmosphere, the essentials for life. I arrived on a planet orbiting a star at just the right distance to absorb that star's energy—energy that caused life to evolve in the beginning.

In my mind the answer was clear. God gave mankind a stage upon which to perform. How the play ends ... is up to us. – *James Lovell 2018 speech at the National Air and Space Museum, The Smithsonian Institute.*

## COMEDY CORNER



"I have always regarded it as part of my mission in life to follow around after Billy Graham and undo some of the work he has done."

Tom Lehrer, Melbourne Town Hall  
21st March 1960





# BLAME IT ON THE SUN

By James Longo

"It is all the sun's fault,"  
Jack said.

What the hell are you  
talking about now?"

"The reason I'm putting on weight and you're portly is because of the sun."

"You better not be calling me fat, even if it's true."

"I said portly," Jack said.

"I swear you said, 'I'm porky.'"

"Would you prefer stout?" Jack said

"You make me sound like a dark beer,"

"But it's the sun's fault you are like a dark beer."

"And how is that?"

"It produces too much energy."

"Where do you come up with this crap?"

"Hear me out," Jack said, raising his index fingers.

"Okay, let's hear it."

"The earth only uses about four percent of the energy that the sun beams on us every day," Jack said.

"Yeah, so what?"

"The human species has found ways to make more food than it needs and increase the amount of free time it needs to survive, which has allowed us as a species time and surplus to muck about."

"If the sun is all that and a can of soup, why are we using fossil fuels? Jill said.



"Fossil fuels are ancient solar energy stored as matter."

"It hasn't been all mucking about; we have done some pretty cool things," Jill said, sounding defensive.

"What percentile of humankind is actually involved in innovations?"

"About 1 percent, not much, innovation is hard," Jill said.

"That leaves a boatload of people with abundance and free time. How many of them are utilizing their resources to improve their life?"

"A bunch, I hope my little utilitarian," Jill said with a smirk.

"Let's say all, but if you have enough abundance and free time, then you have enough free time for a little self-destructive behavior."

I keep hearing people ask,  
"Is America ready for a  
woman president? Or a gay  
president?" Funny thing is I  
never heard anyone ask if  
America was ready for an  
incompetent, vindictive,  
mentally unstable,  
misogynistic, homophobic,  
racist, traitorous egomaniac  
and yet, here we are.

"Okay, I'll give you that one."

"To start performing self-destructive acts, you have to have surplus and free time."

"Maybe you should define self-destructive behavior?"

"Gambling, drug abuse, alcoholism, crime, war, anything that does harm to you and those around you."

"War?" Jill asked, squinting at Jack.

"If the sun didn't produce an abundance of energy, both parties wouldn't have the free time or the abundance to waste trying to destroy their neighbor. If party A is

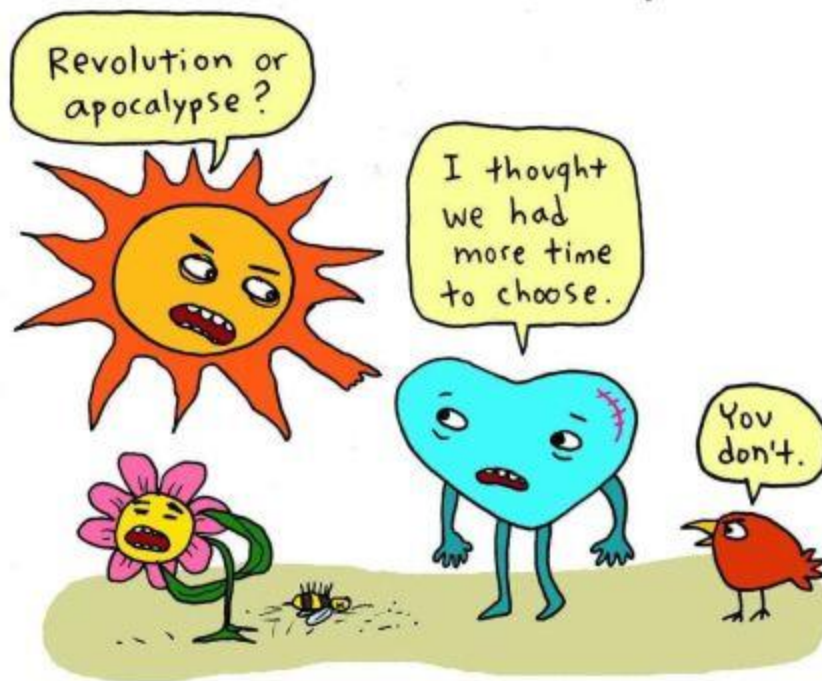
equally bad off as party B, it would never be worth their while for Party A to attack Party B."



"I think that is a little simplistic, but I get your point. I don't think you are taking into account religion, culture, tribalism."

"All those things occur because we have the time to think about those things. If all you have time for is to find food, eat, crap, screw, and sleep, you're not worried about your culture."

**Artist: Stephanie McMillan**



"What you are saying is that all of man's self-destructive tendencies come from this system providing an abundance and the free time, and this is a bad thing?"

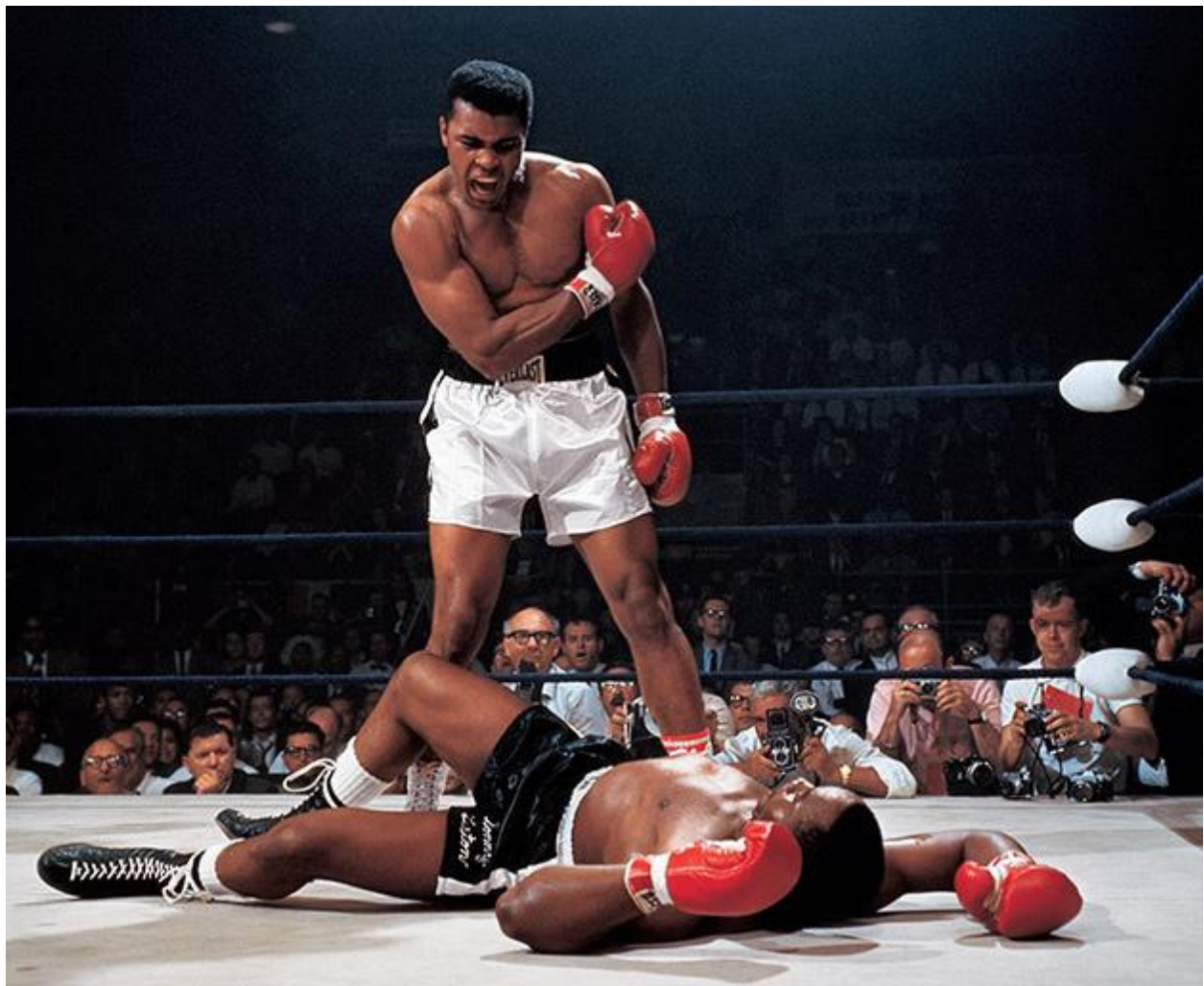
"Yes and no," Jack said, not sounding too sure of himself."

"Yes and no, really," Jill said, chiding him.

"If you don't have money for the first bet or the time to make the first bet. You don't make it. If you don't have money or time for that first drink or drug, you don't do it. If you don't have time to think up the crime, you'll never do the time."



"I guess you are trying to say, idle hands are the devil's workshop."



"Yes, but dopamine is the agent of addiction."

"But how do you stop that? Jill asked.

"If I could figure that out, we'd have even more free time to put on more weight, my little dark beer."

"I think they already have, they call it Ozempic."

They both laughed.



I wasn't prepared for this. Afterward I thought, in my defense, *well, who could have been?* It was a warm lazy afternoon, and I had taken a nap on my chaise lounge in the living room when I woke to the familiar urge to go #2.

I rolled off the lounge and, with bleary eyes, stumbled down the hall to the nearest bathroom. I reached down to open the lid when I found, with some surprise, my toilet was occupied!

What a way to wake up! in my lingering stupor, not to mention stupidity, all I could think of was to flush the occupier, a black lizard at least a foot long, back to the septic tank from whence she had come.

This was not easy – I had to grab the toilet brush to push her toward the sewer pipe. Until then I didn't consider that maybe she didn't want to go back to living in my septic tank, even if it might be warm and somewhat nutritional. But I flushed anyway, down she went, and my immediate problem was solved. Or so I thought.

and then came the guilt. I kept thinking about that poor lizard that I had summarily flushed down the toilet. I needed some support, so I called my son John.

"You did what?! Why would you do that?"

I should have known he would be on the side of the lizard; hell, I raised him to be an environmentalist. "Well, she will probably come back, and I will be more prepared to grab her," was my response.

"I doubt that," John responded harshly. "Not after the way you treated her."

So then, I tried a different approach with Sara. Surely, she would be more understanding. I said, "Sara, this is an invasive species that preys on our smaller native species. We would be better off if they were all eradicated. If I see a Brazilian pepper tree in my yard, I kill it."

Her response was, "but this is a sentient species, it's not a plant!"

Hmm, she had a point there, but then I thought I had the winning response. "OK, if you think we should protect an invasive species, would you apply the same 'sentient species' logic to the Burmese Python? The Everglades National Park scientists are inviting hunters in to kill as many as they can!"

"Ohh, that's not fair!" she responded angrily. "That's a whole different order of threat to an entire ecosystem, and you know it!!"

She was right of course; they were both right. So, I brought in my large pair of leather gloves that go all the way up to my elbows and positioned them next to the toilet just in case I was right in my prediction that the lizard would return. I thought, hell, I've got to be right about something.

Two days later, I opened the toilet lid, and lo and behold, there she was! She couldn't get out of the toilet except of course from the way she had come, but otherwise the porcelain surface allowed her no toe hold.

I put on the gloves and then opened my front door and went back to the toilet where she was curled up just below the waterline. I Figured she might try to escape so I first plugged the right gloved hand into the opening of the toilet's trapway. As I expected, she did try the same escape route but couldn't get past my gloved hand. So, just by closing my hand I had her by the neck. At the same time, I brought my left hand around her body, and I had her captured. I took her – wet and wiggling – out the front door past my befuddled cat O.C., who immediately ran into the house. Holding my captive close against my body, I walked past my neighbor's home to the north and there, gently lowered my lizard



to the grass and slowly brought my hands loose from her body. She stood up, turned her head and looked at me, like she was wondering if she was really free, then took off like a streak across the lawn and to the brush that bordered the creek.

So, bye-bye my little Lizzy. I wish you well. but please stay away from my septic tank :) the end.





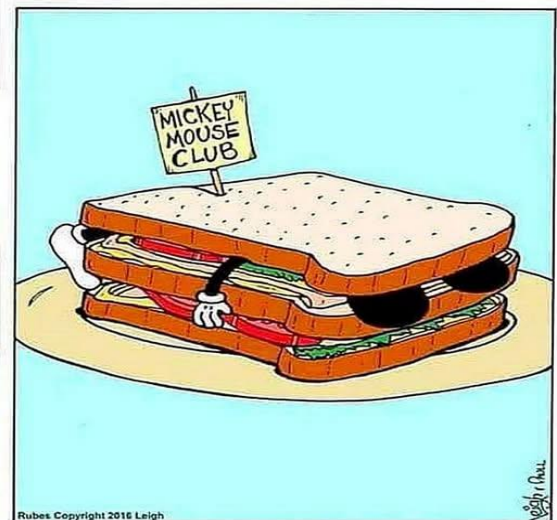
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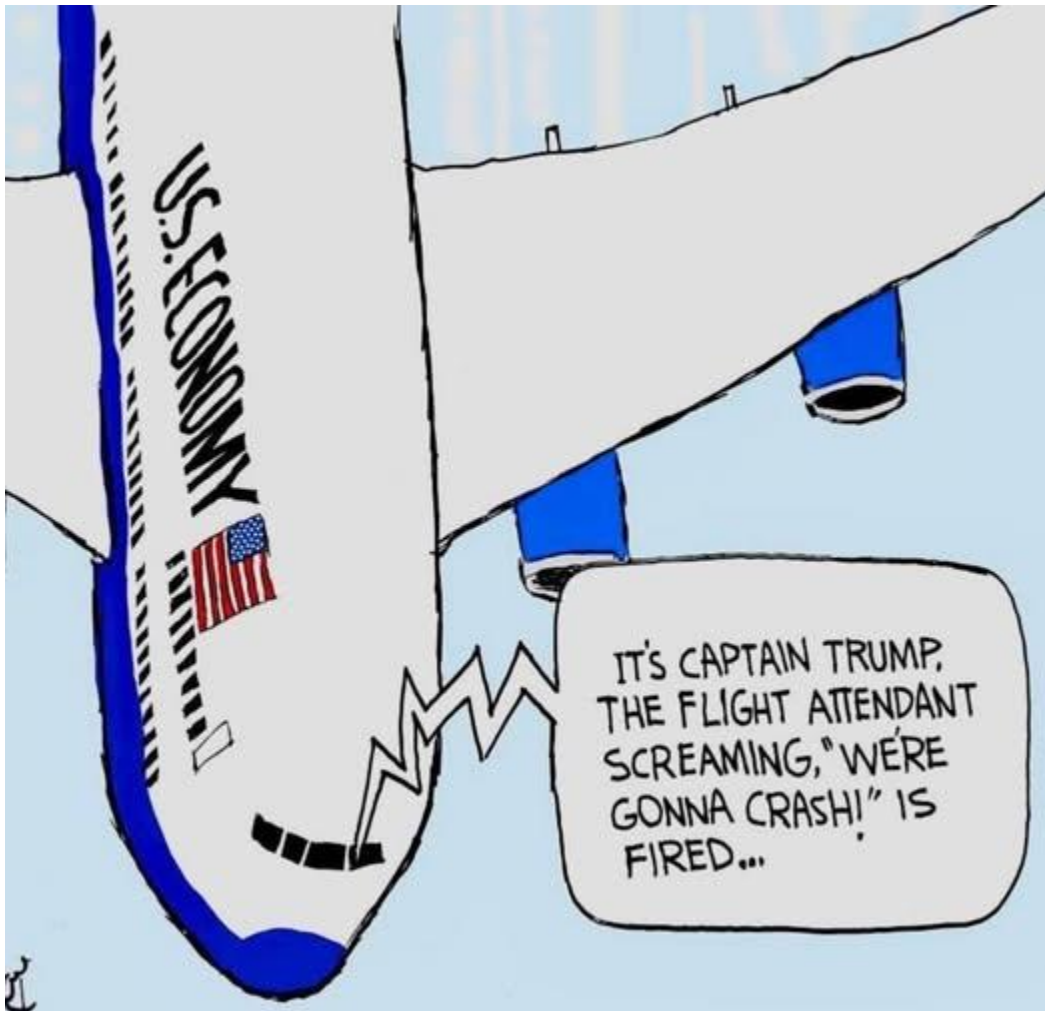
I JUST BIT A REPUBLICAN



I HAD TO LICK MY ASS FOR AN HOUR TO GET RID OF THE TASTE



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### The ICE mask decoder



A husband said to  
his wife.  
“The guys at the  
club said that our  
mailman has slept  
with every woman  
on our street except  
one...”  
Wife replies  
“I bet it’s Paula.”

