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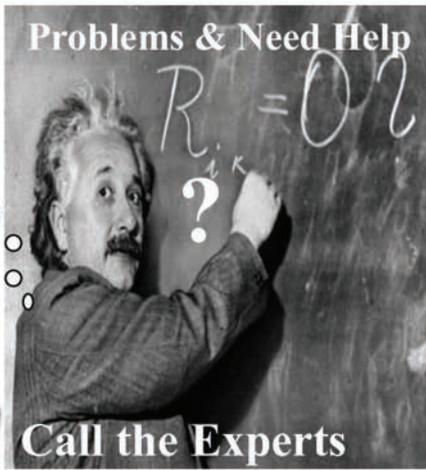
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OBAMA TURNED HIS BACK ON HIS BASE

KEITH OLBERMANN

To paraphrase Churchill, again, let me begin by saying the most unpopular and most unwelcome thing: “That we have sustained a defeat without a war, the consequences of which will travel far with us along our road. We should know that we have passed an awful milestone in our history, when the whole equilibrium of American politics and policy have been deranged, and that the terrible words have for the time being, been pronounced against this Administration: ‘thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting’.”

In exchange for selling out a principal campaign pledge, and the people to whom and for whom it was made. In exchange for betraying the truth that the idle and corporate rich of this country have gotten unprecedented and wholly indefensible tax cuts for a decade. In exchange for giving the idle and corporate rich of this country two more years in which to accumulate still more, and more vast piles of personal wealth with which they can buy and sell everybody else.

In exchange for extending what he spent the weeks before the mid-terms calling “tax cuts for millionaires and billionaires” to people who have proven, without a scintilla of doubt, without even a fig leaf of phony effort to make it look like they would do otherwise, that they will keep the money for themselves.

In exchange for injecting new vigor into the infantile, moronic, disproved-for-a-decade three-card monte game of an economic theory purveyed by these treacherous and ultimately traitorous Republicans, that tax cuts for the rich will somehow lead to job creation even though if that had ever been true in the slightest the economy would

not be where it is today.

In exchange for giving tax cuts for the rich which the nation cannot afford, and extending their vintage through the next election and thus promising at best a re-enactment of this whole sorry, amoral, degrading spectacle in the winter of 2012 and at worst a rubber-stamp from a wholly Republican House and Senate and even White House.

In exchange for this searing and transcendent capitulation, the President got just thirteen months of extended benefits for those unemployed less than 100 weeks. And he got nothing absolutely nothing for those unemployed for longer--the 99ers.

This the Administration is celebrating--taking the victims of Republican Economic Policy, taking the living breathing proof that the Bush Tax Cuts for the rich do not create jobs, and putting economic bullseyes on their backs as of next December.

On the one hand, unaffordable tax breaks for the beneficiaries of the Bush tax cuts, made ever more permanent as they threaten to suck four trillion dollars out of government revenues in the next decade. On the other hand, an insufficient dead-end unemployment solution for Americans who would actually work for a living, made ever more temporary.

And we are hearing nothing about those 99ers. Even though the numbers of them will balloon from two million to four million or more by next December, even with this deal. Even though just last Thursday, the President’s own Council of Economic Advisers reiterated the reality that the easiest way to create jobs and keep jobs is to make sure that the unemployed continue to have money to spend.

The unemployed, unlike the rich whom this President has just bowed to

are, in fact, the job creators. They do not have investment portfolios to expand. They do not have vast savings into which to stuff the government checks. They have to spend the money. And the Council reported last week that when someone becomes a 99er his or her household loses at least a third of its income. And where the 99er was the sole breadwinner--four households out of ten--they lose 9/10ths of their income.

The economy is surprisingly simple. If business

...in the middle of a crisis over making temporary Republican tax cuts permanent, you give the Republicans another temporary Republican tax cut that they can come back later to blackmail you into making permanent.

-- Keith Olbermann

and the rich won't spend, and the middle class can't spend, the only factor left to keep pushing money into the insatiable maw of capitalism is the government. So, should the government give the money to the rich who keep it, or the not rich, who spend it? Apparently this President does not know the answer to that question. Even though he has his own Council of Economic Advisers.

Mr. President, for these meager crumbs, you have given up costly, insulting, divisive, destructive tax cuts for the rich and you have given in to Republican blackmail which will be followed by more Republican blackmail. Of course, it's not just tax cuts for the rich that you've given up. There is also your new temporary payroll tax holiday, establishing a precedent that the way money is pumped into Social Security should be negotiated and traded off and making it just that much easier to gut Social Security later.

And, oh by the way, in the middle of a crisis over making temporary Republican tax cuts permanent, you give the Republicans another temporary Republican tax cut that they can come back later to blackmail you into making permanent. Well, Sir, at least that's the end of it.

Except, of course, for the estate tax, what Republicans so happily call "the death tax." Which will be reduced from its 2009 levels. Huh?

The money given by one dead rich person to some living rich persons, will not be taxed, up to five million dollars. More than five million and it's 35 percent--which is less than it was under the tax laws of President Bush's last fiscal year. Sir, you have given undeserved tax breaks--and you have carved them a little more deeply into the stone of law--to rich people, living and dead. And you want me to tell them which Democrat proposed the Estate Tax giveaway?

Blanche Lincoln! Blanche Lincoln, repudiated by nearly half the Arkansans in her own party, and then repudiated by 63 percent of the voters in Arkansas. Mr. President, you're listening to Blanche Lincoln? What? Were Bob Beckel and Pat Caddell unavailable?

This President negotiates down from a position of strength better than any politician in our recent history. It is too late now to go back and ask why the President, why the wobbly Democratic leadership, whiffed on its chance to force John Boehner to put his money where his mouth was. In September Boehner said if he had no other option, of course he would vote to extend tax breaks only for the middle class.

So the President and the Democrats gave him another option, naturally. But didn't extending the Bush Tax Cuts for the wealthy become necessary to get Republican support for extending the jobless benefits? Nonsense.

Five times in the last two years, the Republicans have gone along with extending those jobless benefits, and they've done it without being bribed with tax cuts for the rich. Even now Boehner's September confession, and the GOP's unwillingness to take the blame for killing off jobless benefits, offered an alternative blueprint for this President:



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Let the law expire as scheduled in 24 days. Let all the tax breaks go, and when the Republicans take over the House and try to pass them anew, if they somehow are not stopped in the Senate, veto anything that does not keep tax cuts for the middle class and unemployment benefits as the dog, and perks for the rich as the tail. The GOP is still terrified of being blamed for cutting off the unemployed. You take that fact and you break them with it.

There is only one possible rational explanation for this irrational and childish transaction. There are Republicans and Tea Partiers who are still intent on cutting off their noses to spite their faces--the "Blind Rage Conservatives" for whom any compromise is disaster, just as for this President, apparently no compromise is disaster.

Maybe the reason the Administration's numbers don't add up in this deal is that it was too busy instead counting votes and there really are enough on the Far Right to sink it and the President winds up having his cake and eating it too, proposing what he can call a "tax compromise" and then having it derailed publicly and embarrassingly by the Republicans. Maybe the political calculus here exceeds both in priority and quality, the real calculus.

But I deeply doubt it. Yesterday I had an exchange with a very Senior member of this Administration who wanted to sell me on this deal. I pointed out that that was fine, except that--as I phrased it to him--"frankly the base has just vanished." "Well," he replied, "then they must not have read the details." There, in a nutshell, is this Admin-

istration. They didn't make a bad deal--we just don't understand it.

Just as it was our fault, Mr. President, for not understanding your refusal of even the most perfunctory of investigations of rendition or domestic spying or the other crimes of the Bush Administration, or why you have now established for those future Administrations who want to repeat those crimes, that the punishment for them will be nothing.

Just as it was our fault, Mr. President, for not understanding Afghanistan. Just as we didn't correctly perceive, Sir, the necessity for the continuation of Gitmo. Or how we failed to intuit, President Obama, your preemptive abandonment of Single Payer and the Public Option. Or how we couldn't have foreseen your foot-dragging on "Don't ask, don't tell." Just as we shouldn't have gotten you angry at your news conference and made all the moderate Democrats wonder why in the hell you get publicly angry so often at the liberals who campaigned for you and whether you might save just a touch of that sarcasm and that self-martyrdom for the Republicans.

And of course, Mr. President how we totally betrayed your Administration by not concluding our prayers every night by saying "Thank you for preventing another Great Depression, you are entitled to skate along on your own wonderfulness indefinitely and if you get less than you could have on Health Care Reform or taxes, well, that'll be okay, we're happy to pay \$10,000 for a \$300

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car because hey, it could've been \$20,000, right? And because we only expect you to do one thing correctly during a presidency and you had pretty much cleared that obligation when it proved that you were, indeed, not John McCain."

We are very very sorry. In some sense, the Senior Member's remark about how we "did not read the details" is not utterly absurd. We have enabled this President, and his compromises-spinning-within-compromises. And now there are, finally, those within his own party who have said "enough." In the Senate, the Independent, Mr. Sanders deserves the support of every American, as does Mr. Conyers and Mr. McDermott and the others in the house. It is not disloyalty to the Democratic party to tell a Democratic president he is goddamned wrong.

It is not disloyalty for the 99ers and the 99ers-to-be to rally in the streets of Washington. It is not disloyalty to remind the President that he was elected by people to whom he had given a clear outline of what he would do for them, and if he does not steer out of the skid of what he is doing to them, he will not only not be re-elected, he may not even be re-nominated.

It is not disloyalty to remind him that we are not bound to an individual. We are bound to principles. If the individual changes, or fails often and needlessly, then we



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get a new man. Or woman. None of that is disloyalty. It is self-defense. It is the acknowledgment that, as my hero Thurber wrote, you might as well fall flat on your face as lean over too far backwards.

That is what the base is saying to this President, about his Presidency. "Well, then, (we) must not have read the details." The Churchill quotation--as opposed to the quotation from the very Senior member of your Administration, Mr. President--is from October 5th, 1938.

I don't want to make any true comparison to the historical event to which it related. The viewer can go ahead and look it up if they wish. I will confess I won't fight if anybody wants to draw a comparison between what you've done with our domestic politics of our day, to what Neville Chamberlain did with the international politics of his.

The rest of what Churchill said, paraphrased--but only slightly paraphrased--bears repeating again. The terrible words have for the time being, been pronounced against this Administration: "Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting." And do not suppose that this is the end. This is only the beginning of the reckoning. This is only the first sip, the first foretaste of a bitter cup which will be proffered to us year by year unless by a supreme recovery of moral health and political vigor, we arise again and take our stand for what is right.

Reprinted from *Countdown*.

FRANTIC DEFICIT FEAR MONGERING

JAMES K. GALBRAITH

The report of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, issued on December 1st by Chairmen Erskine Bowles and Alan Simpson, is entitled "The Moment of Truth." The words appear in block caps on the second page, weighty and portentous. They reappear in the first paragraph of the preamble: "Throughout our nation's history, Americans have found the courage to do right by our children's future. Deep down, every American knows that we face a moment of truth once again."

These sentences set the tone. The first is a bald-faced lie, as a Westerner like Senator Simpson knows perfectly well. To the contrary, we have often fallen under the sway of robber barons, water barons, oil barons, bison-killers, clear-cutters and strip-miners, hell-bent on maximum pillage in the shortest time. Only occasionally have a few heroes like Teddy and Franklin Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot and Harold Ickes Sr. emerged to battle for the most precious physical elements of our heritage--and then only with limited success.

In the next paragraph, the Commission states the threat: "Our challenge is clear and inescapable. America cannot be great if we go broke." Exactly what it might mean for America to "go broke" is not explained. Nor is it anywhere in the report. But the paragraph continues: "Our businesses will not be able to grow and create jobs, and our workers will not be able to compete successfully for the jobs of the future without a plan to get this crushing debt burden off our backs."

Apparently "going broke" means becoming unable to pay interest on the national debt. That being so,

let's ask the question: under what circumstances might the United States Treasury Department become unable to pay interest on the federal debt?

Unlike Argentina or Ireland, the United States owes its debts in a currency it controls. When our Treasury wishes to make a payment, it sends a signal, by computer, to the payee's bank. The bank posts the payment by changing a number in the bank account of the payee. The payee, on checking his or her account, now realizes that she or he has a larger balance, and so larger spending power. That's all there is to it.

There is no way that this process can be disrupted by any economic force. Yes, Congress could forbid payments--but the payments are ordered in the Constitution, so Treasury would just head to court. A nuclear bomb might disrupt the computers. But otherwise, nothing ever can, or ever will, stop the United States Treasury from paying interest when due. The notion that "America" might "go broke" is meaningless. To say that it might in a White House document is disturbing.

In the third paragraph of the preamble, the Commission tugs on a few familiar heart-strings: "Ever since the economic downturn, families across the country have huddled around kitchen tables, making tough choices about what they hold most dear and what they can learn to do without. They expect and deserve their leaders to do the same." Who would not be moved by this image of a family, "huddled" against the cold, working on the family budget, waiting for "their leaders" to work on theirs?

If this family is a typical American household, chances are it has some experience with the federal presence in the economy. A retired parent gets Social Security and Medicare, and the others expect to do so later on. An indigent aunt receives Medicaid. An older brother is a veteran, perhaps with some injuries or trauma picked up in Afghanistan or Iraq. The mortgage interest is deducted from taxable income. Quite a few such workers may be postal workers, or

TSA inspectors, or other public servants. Or perhaps the working parents have their wages supplemented with the Earned Income Tax credit.

When our family takes a moment from its own budget plans to examine this one, they may feel less than completely grateful. Perhaps they'll notice that the sacrifices so nobly embraced by "their leaders" will actually fall on them. Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid will

The Commission also seems unaware that the world crisis didn't begin in Greece. It began in America. It spread to Greece when US private debt markets collapsed and investors sought safety by dumping small-country bonds.

-- James K. Galbraith

be cut. The Earned Income Tax credit might go away. The mortgage interest deduction will be curtailed--depressing home prices even if our family's modest mortgage remains deductible. Federal workers--ten percent of them--would be singled out and fired. Military pensions will be reduced, we learn, to bring them "in line with standard practices in the private sector." Practices in the private sector often do not include pensions; the commission does not say why, if that is so, future young men and women would volunteer.

Noticeably missing from the Commission's plan are measures that would fall on the "leaders" themselves. The very richest pay cash for their houses. The commission would reduce, not increase, marginal income tax rates. There is no suggestion of a financial transactions tax. It's true that the Commission would tax capital gains and dividends as ordinary income, but at the top rates they propose, who would care?

In the fourth paragraph, the Commissioners declare that: "...we spent the past eight months studying the same cold, hard facts. Together, we have reached these unavoidable conclusions. The problem is real. The solution will be painful. There is no easy way out. And Washington must lead." The reference to "studying" is suggestive. Are there any studies? White papers? Background analyses? Normally, one might expect a commission to produce some. In this case, it did not. The Commission's web site makes no mention of any such thing.

Paragraph five makes two uses of the word "grandchildren," but otherwise says nothing.

In paragraph six, the Commission summarizes the evidence for its dire conclusions: "Over the course of our deliberations, the urgency of our mission has become all the more apparent. The contagion of debt that began in Greece and continues to sweep through Europe shows us clearly that no economy will be immune. If the US does not put its house in order, the reckoning will be sure and the devastation severe."

This is as close to an evidence-based statement as the preamble gets. So what is the evidence? Does the European crisis really show "clearly that no economy will be immune?"

Well, in fact Germany, France, Holland, Britain and even (so far) Belgium are quite immune, despite debt-to-GDP ratios comparable to or higher than ours. Even Italy isn't in crisis (at least, not yet). Ireland is deep in crisis, despite budget surpluses before the crisis and three years of austerity even harsher than proposed here. Spain is in crisis, despite a public debt burden much lower than our own. What seems clear, on any reasonable reading, is that big countries don't get hit by speculators the way small countries do.

The Commission also seems unaware that the world crisis didn't begin in Greece. It began in America. It spread to Greece when US private debt markets collapsed and investors sought safety by dumping small-country bonds. And where did the investors flee? Why, directly into United States Treasury bonds! Quite the opposite of being vulnerable to crisis, the US Treasury is the largest,

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most obvious, most notorious and greatest beneficiary.

The only other effort at economic analysis in the report is the section entitled "The Looming Fiscal Crisis." This begins with the claim that, "Our nation is on an unsustainable fiscal path." No evidence is presented. The current deficit is big, of course, because unemployment is high, but there is no program here to fight unemployment.

The rest of the section argues that something terrible will happen if the debt-to-GDP ratio rises, as projected, to 90 percent in 2020--and then continues on to 185 percent of GDP by 2035. Yes, this would be terrible: it would mean that the private economy never recovered. But the commission assumes that the private economy does recover.

In testimony to the Commission on June 30, I described the incoherent nature of the projections that produce these scary debt-to-GDP numbers. The Report makes no effort to rebut my work. Indeed, the fact that I submitted testimony, at their invitation, on behalf of Americans for Democratic Action, goes unmentioned on their witness list.

The final three paragraphs of this section trot out the bugbears. There is the fact that much US Treasury debt is held by (gasp) China, "a nation that may not share our country's aspirations and strategic interests." As if China's US debt holdings were not determined by China's trade surplus, but by our debt level.

And then the Commission reverts to the great bogeyman of 1993, President Clinton's first year: The bond

market. "If we do not act soon to reassure the markets," they write, "the risk of crisis will increase." Oh really? You can look up the interest rates in the paper, any day.

The old Soviet Union had two newspapers, *Pravda* and *Izvestia*--Truth and Light--and the saying in Moscow was, "Where there is Truth, there's no Light. And where there is Light, there's no Truth." It's clear now that the Soviet Union didn't really end. The walls came down, and we became them.

James K. Galbraith is General Editor of *Galbraith: The Affluent Society and Other Writings, 1952-1967*, just published by Library of America. He teaches at The University of Texas at Austin.

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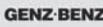
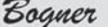
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DEFICIT DISTENTION DEFICIT

JOHN O'KANE

The deficit is now all the rage. Though post-election polls show it's jobs and economic certainty that voters want most, it's the deficit that's getting the attention. The influx of anti-government-and-taxes patriots has something to do with this, and since the votes have been cast all parties can express their true interests, or surely those of their favorite interest group. The republicans now claim a mandate to balance the budget. But were they reading tea leaves instead of learning what the ballots really say, perhaps to get a fix on how to pass off a political agenda as an economic program?

With the deluge of hype and twisted messages, were voters informed enough to give these angry revolters a real mandate?

Whatever the mandate, their arrival certainly gives veteran lawmakers the bravado to try and cut their way to prosperity. They can piggyback the populist tide and resell the idea always on the table that making the debits and credits match for the nation has to be right. And who out in the heartland won't buy a balanced budget!

An unbalanced budget has been the Republicans' perennial peeve, though it's the Democrats who've cleaned up the fiscal messes, at least in recent generations, while continuing to be pilloried by the right's disinformation dittos as tax-and-

spenders. Many out in the heartland are amnesiacs when it comes to such matters, but this gives the spin a better chance of sticking to the ribs. What's clear is that there's much more at stake here than simply getting our financial house in order, and now we'll see how the victory-giddy republicans smear the red ink.

Unfortunately, the Democrats have been ever willing during the past decade's shift right to let them frame the agenda, an art form Obama has refined in the past two years. His choice of Alan Simpson and Erskine Bowles to direct the Fiscal Responsibility and Reform Commission

fits the playbook perfectly.

But the real issue is the lack of a jobs program and a credible narrative about how to change the economy. Those dangling percentages of unemployed out there in the heartland translate into the revenue shortfalls forcing the downward spiral and imploding the economy. Keeping folks working means keeping the taxes flowing into government coffers, and a greater means to pay for healthcare, war, stimulus and all the other needs the budget commissioners say we can't now afford.

So is the refusal to develop a jobs program, the refusal to use any economic model other than the filter-down fantasy from the Bush years that it's the elite who create jobs if we can just give them more free money, proof that the democrats really relish the opportunity to switch gears?

There was a window of opportunity with the recent

robo-foreclosure scam to begin getting to the root of the economic crisis. This might have even turned the election around for democrats. A passionate Obama pushing left of the center where he's waffled forever to place a moratorium on foreclosures, like many hoped, might have kept independents, Reagan democrats and the party's alienated base on board. Some commitment to something that might at least stiffen the flagging vocabulary of hope and change. How many times can you move to the center and still be in it? Obama's rhetoric is liberal enough for the right to call him one, but he folds on issues faster than his language can be decoded.

Mark Shields

asked on *The News Hour* recently if Obama's post-election momentum will

bring on the policies and poses of Harry Truman or Bill Clinton. He's already had lots of practice shadowing the latter, so it's hard to imagine him bypassing bogus bipartisanship and going straight to the people to salvage campaign promises in the fashion of the former. His staff is already leaking his willingness to compromise and extend the Bush tax cuts, just like he was so quick to say that single payer and the public option were not viable courses to pursue in advance of any debate.

So if the deficit is replacing the "debate" on the economy, under the guise by the center-right that correct-

**Maybe these hawks
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-- John O'Kane

ing that problem will get the unemployment rate back to “normal,” then how exactly will this work? The dearth of credible economists front and center in this “debate” is not helping us understand. If the recession is due to the repression of demand, then how will cutting more jobs and taking more resources away from those most affected pull us back from the brink of economic disaster and stabilize American society?

Public sector cuts at the state and local levels are dampening the employment picture. This spending is what’s needed to kick-start the recovery. The cash-rich financial sector is not loaning to those who can, so it’s absurd to think that more tax cuts or free money from the Fed will in any way solve the problem.

Are debtors’ prisons next? What do they propose to do with the unemployed while the post-cutting wait-game plays out? Perhaps put them in the space void created by the budget-strapped prison system? Maybe these hawks will take their cue from those early American puritans who felt they had to finger transgressors in public, expose them as dead letters, non-beings, and make em pay over and over again.

It’s like they want to cease doing what can eliminate the need for cuts in the first place; convince us to accept the current economic situation as permanent. When revenues reverse, the cuts will be history. But policies themselves can help reduce deficits.

It’s right out of the shock doctrine playbook: bleed ‘em on the way up, bleed ‘em when they’re down. Take advantage of your superior resources at the moment of the adversary’s greatest weakness to redistribute wealth upward. Jam the need for long term down their throats so often they’ll confuse it with the short term. Keep the budget-balancing idea in their faces while slipping in another agenda.

The proposals of Obama’s commission are actually not so hidden. Deficit-cutting appears seventh on its list of priorities! What it really proposes, according to Paul Krugman, is a “mixture of tax cuts and tax increases—tax cuts for the wealthy, tax increases for the middle class.” They want to eliminate the ability of middle class Americans to deduct health benefits and mortgage interest, staples for keeping this mass of citizens in the game. Much of the revenue however will not be used to reduce the deficit, but “to allow sharp reductions in both the top marginal tax rate and in the corporate tax rate” Some conservatives!

This means they believe no real recovery is necessary. They’ve tested the patience of the public already, pushed the credit card rates to usurious levels with mostly a whimper, jacked up the gas prices to nearly \$5 per gallon with barely that, and are banking on complacency during the adjustment stretch when they can roll back wages and bennies to the stone age. They must feel we’ll soften faster than Obama’s left brain.

There was a time after all, before Reaganomics rooted and routed our institutions, when the idea of a permanent temporary work force seemed unthinkable to most everyone. Since at the current rate of job creation in the

private sector it will take many years to merely replace the losses since the recession began, absence external stimulus, we’re going to likely see a pretty creative gulag evolve very soon.

The assumption at the core of such a feat of social engineering must be that this group of unemployed is undeserving, and that they will define themselves accordingly. Above all that our system no longer functions through a social contract. It works like a lottery. Winners are celebrated and losers are ignored, each occupying a different economy.

The diehard cutters and balancers are not super-charged patriots who really care about the imminent threat of inflation, or the burden of debt on our successors. If you’ve got little income, the fear of inflation has yet to make it onto the backburner. They want to micromanage our great, great grandchildren’s retirement prospects now because it will divert attention from macromanaging the fates of those who are retiring now. As Robert Kuttner notes, “the projected budget in 2030 will be far more influenced by whether the economy recovers any time soon than by what cuts are imagined for 20 years in the future”

So this is not just wrongheaded stuff, but a very calculating matter. The pundits from the right wing think tanks who sit in for the economists on mainstream news shows, and are disproportionately represented, harp away

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with a list of generalities and clichés that make them seem barely able to master Econ 101 because they know they can get away with acting dumb in a dumbed-down climate. The moderators will likely not ask them hard questions anyway. They usually let the big-government-is-taking-away-my-freedom claims ride, offering little if any challenge.

But the government expansion that so many talk about, the big bureaucracies and major new programs most point to, is an illusion. The bank bailouts and the safety net spending are outlays resulting from the recession. The number of workers in the public sector is declining.

The hawks are virtual partners with the Chicago School but perhaps know Keynes better than Smith, Von Hayek and Friedman. They must know that budget deficits are the vehicle to prosperity for the middle class; the means to capital they'll never get from Wall Street. Fed-directed investment in the private sector, along with a progressive tax structure dismantled in the early Reagan years, were the basis for the great expansion of our middle class and the tremendous productivity and wealth of the post-WWII era. The red ink trumped the red scares.

Capital in the pockets of those without it can be the vehicle for multiplying it through the system, and help prevent recession, which is after all a subtraction that becomes a downward spiral and encourages hoarding and stockpiling by those who claim they can't find places to invest their reserves.

This explains the criticism Obama got from the G20, that we're slaves to primitive economic models proven faulty for sure with the demise of the Bush regime. The fact that they're still in force is disturbing since Obama railed against the bankruptcy of filter-down economics, the centerpiece of the Reagan revolution, during the 2008 campaign. But this gives the snooty scolding from Europe, that our wild west approach may retard the global system, greater credibility since its safety nets and high wage structure offer a successful alternative for the world to see.

How are so many underdeveloped economies, aka former banana republics, buffering the recession so much better than we are? They're even making improvements in healing the literacy and inequality gaps, and despite high tax rates and government spending.

Warren Buffett broke ranks this past weekend (11/12/10) on "This Week," weighing in on the debate about whether to extend the Bush tax cuts. Echoing the substantial research done already on what their effect has been on job creation, by Larry Bartels and others, he soundly rejects the notion that these cuts lead to job creation. The rich always say this, he claims! The filter-down policies of the past 10 years simply haven't worked. Business people like himself have never had it so good in recent times, and they don't pay enough taxes!

Since the value of these cuts would effectively cancel the "deficit problem," we'll see how these ideas play out in the minds of the Congressional austerity-hawks in the weeks to come.

Previously posted on *HuffingtonPost.com*.

K.C.

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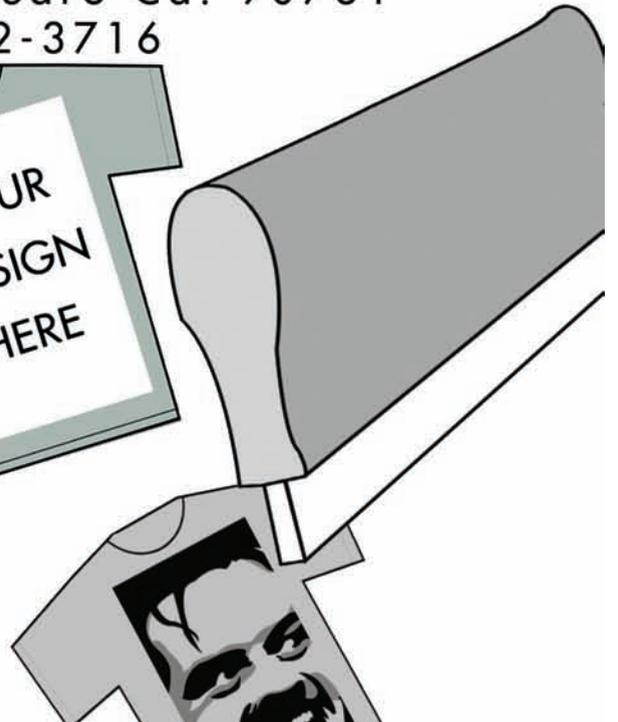
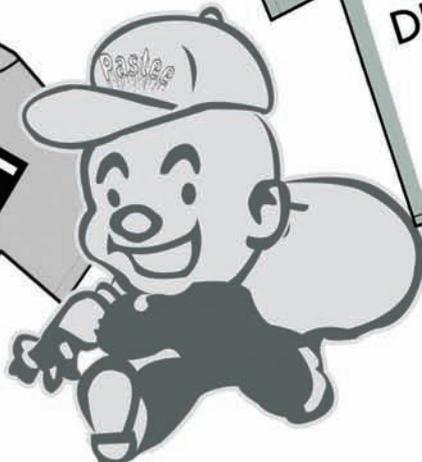
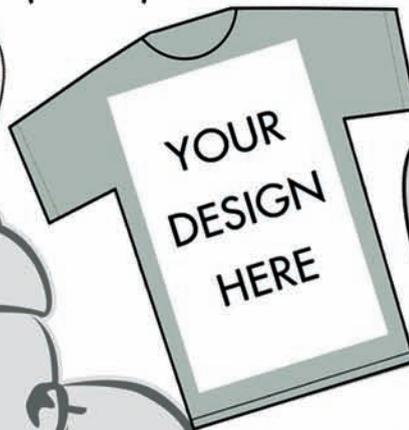


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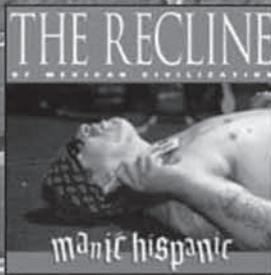
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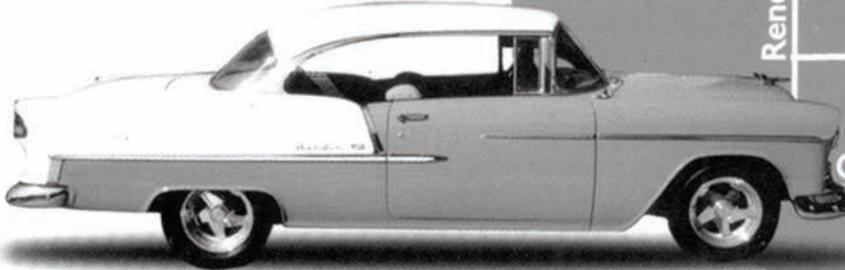
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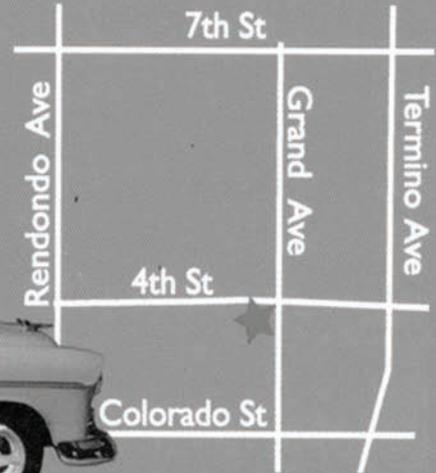
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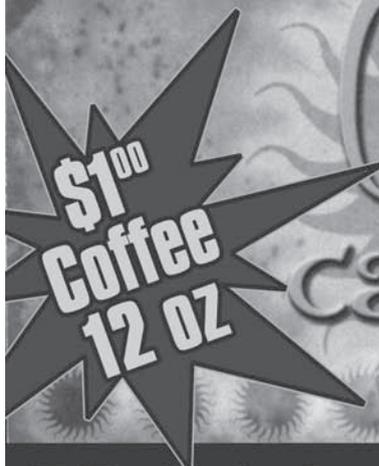
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PHARMACOLOGIC WATERBOARDING

JASON LEOPOLD AND
JEFFREY KAYE

The Defense Department forced all “war on terror” detainees at the Guantanamo Bay prison to take a high dosage of a controversial antimalarial drug, mefloquine, an act that an Army public health physician called “pharmacologic waterboarding.”

The US military administered the drug despite Pentagon knowledge that mefloquine caused severe neuropsychiatric side effects, including suicidal thoughts, hallucinations and anxiety. The drug was used on the prisoners whether they were presumed to have malaria or not.

Interviews conducted over the past two months with tropical disease experts and a review of Defense Department documents and peer-reviewed journals show there were no preexisting cases where mefloquine was ever prescribed for mass presumptive treatment of malaria.

The revelation, which has not been previously reported, was buried in documents publicly released by the Defense Department (DoD) two years ago as part of the government’s investigation into the June 2006 deaths of three Guantanamo detainees.

Army Staff Sgt. Joe Hickman, who was stationed at Guantanamo at the time of the suicides, and has presented evidence that demonstrates the three detainees could not have died by hanging themselves, noticed in the detainees’ medical files that they were given mefloquine. Hickman has been investigating the circumstances behind the detainees’ deaths for nearly four years.

All detainees arriving at Guantanamo in January 2002 were first given a treatment dosage of 1,250 mg of mefloquine, before laboratory tests were conducted to determine if they actually had the disease, according to a section of the DoD documents entitled “Standard Inprocessing Orders For Detainees.” The 1,250 mg dosage is what would be given if the detainees actually had malaria.

That dosage is five times higher than the prophylactic dose given to individuals to prevent the disease.

Maj. Remington Nevin, an Army public health physician, who formerly worked at the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center and has written extensively about mefloquine, said in an interview the use of mefloquine “in this manner...is, at best, an egregious malpractice.”

The government has exposed detainees “to unacceptably high risks of potentially severe neuropsychiatric side effects, including seizures, intense vertigo, hallucinations, paranoid delusions, aggression, panic, anxiety, severe insomnia, and thoughts of suicide,” said Nevin, who was not speaking in an official capacity, but offering opinions as a board-certified, preventive medicine physician. “These side effects could be as severe as those intended through the application of ‘enhanced interrogation techniques.’”

Mefloquine is also known by its brand name Lariam. It was researched by the US Army in the 1970s and licensed by the Food and Drug Administration in 1989. Since its introduction, it has been directly linked to serious

adverse effects, including depression, anxiety, panic attacks, confusion, hallucinations, bizarre dreams, nausea, vomiting, sores and homicidal and suicidal thoughts. It belongs to a class of drugs known as quinolines, which were part of a 1956 human experiment study to investigate “toxic cerebral states,” as part of the CIA’s MKULTRA mind-control program.

The Army tapped the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR) to develop mefloquine and it was later licensed to the Swiss pharmaceutical company F. Hoffman-La Roche. The first human trials of mefloquine were

conducted in the mid-1970s on prisoners, who were deliberately inoculated with malaria at Stateville Correctional Prison near Joliet, Illinois, the site of controversial antimalarial experimentation in the early 1940s.

The drug was administered to Guantanamo detainees without regard for their medical or psychological history, despite its considerable risk of exacerbating pre-existing conditions. Mefloquine is also known to have serious side effects among individuals under treatment for depression or other serious mental health disorders, which numerous detainees were said to have been treated for, ac-

[Mefloquine] was administered to Guantanamo detainees without regard for their medical or psychological history, despite its considerable risk of exacerbating pre-existing conditions.

--Jason Leopold and Jeffrey Kaye

ording to their attorneys and published reports.

Dr. G. Richard Olds, a tropical disease specialist and the founding dean of the Medical School at the University of California, Riverside said that in his “professional opinion there is no medical justification for giving a massive dose of mefloquine to an asymptomatic individual.”

“I also do not see the medical benefit of treating a person in Cuba with a prophylactic dose of mefloquine,” Olds said. Mefloquine is “a fat soluble, and as a result, it does build up in the body and has a very long half-life. This is important since a massive dose of this drug is not easily corrected and the ‘side effects’ of the medication could last for weeks or months.”

In 2002, when the prison was established and mefloquine first administered, there were dozens of suicide attempts at Guantanamo. That same year, the DoD stopped reporting attempted suicides.

By February 2002, there were at least 459 detainees imprisoned at Guantanamo. In March of that year, according to Montgomery Granger in *Saving Grace at Guantanamo Bay: Memoir of a Citizen Warrior*, “the situation” at the prison began “deteriorating rapidly.”

“There is more and more psychosis becoming evident in detainees...,” wrote Granger, an Army Reserve major and medic who was stationed at Guantanamo in 2002. “We already have probably a dozen or so detainees who are psychiatric cases. The number is growing.”

Presumptive Treatment

Though malaria is nonexistent in Cuba, DoD spokeswoman Maj. Tanya Bradsher said that the US government was concerned that the disease would be reintroduced into the country as detainees were transferred to the prison facility in January 2002.

A “decision was made,” Bradsher said in an email, to “presumptively treat each arriving Guantanamo detainee for malaria to prevent the possibility of having mosquito-borne [sic] spread from an infected individual to uninfected individuals in the Guantanamo population, the guard force, the population at the Naval base or the broader Cuban population.”

But Granger wrote in his book that a Navy entomologist was present at Guantanamo in January and February 2002 and during that time only identified insects that were nuisances and did not identify any insects that were carriers of a disease, such as malaria.

Nevertheless, Bradsher said the “mefloquine dosage [given to detainees] was entirely for public health purposes...and not for any other purpose,” and “is completely appropriate.” She added that “the risks and benefits to the health of the detainees were central considerations.”

A September 13, 2002, DoD memo governing the operational use of mefloquine said, “Malaria is not a threat in Guantanamo Bay.” Indeed, there have only been two to three reported cases of malaria at Guantanamo.

The DoD memo, signed by Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs William Winkenwerder, was

sent to then-Rep. John McHugh, the Republican chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Military Personnel. McHugh is now Secretary of the Army.

A Senate staff member said the Senate Armed Services Committee was never briefed about malaria concerns at Guantanamo nor was the committee made aware of “any issue related to the use of mefloquine or any other anti-malarial drug” related to “the treatment of detainees.”

When questions were raised at a February 19, 2002 meeting of the Armed Forces Epidemiological Board (AFEB) about what measures the military was taking to address malaria concerns at Guantanamo, Navy Capt. Alan J. Yund, the liaison officer to the AFEB, did not disclose that mefloquine was being administered to detainees as a form of presumptive treatment, and indicated that infected detainees who may have had the disease would be treated on a case-by-case basis.

Yund also said detainees were given a different anti-malarial drug known as primaquine and noted that “informed consent” was “absolutely practiced” prior to administering drugs, an assertion that contradicts claims made by numerous detainees who said they were forced to take drugs even if they protested. Yund did not return calls for comment.

Bradsher declined to respond to a follow-up question about who made the decision to presumptively treat

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detainees with mefloquine.

An April 16, 2002, meeting of the Interagency Working Group for Antimalarial Chemotherapy, which DoD, along with other federal government agencies, is a part of, was specifically dedicated to investigating mefloquine's use and the drug's side effects. The group concluded that study designs on mefloquine up to that point were flawed or biased and criticized DoD medical policy for disregarding scientific fact and basing itself more on "sensational or best marketed information."

The Working Group called for additional research, and warned, "other treatment regimes should be carefully considered before mefloquine is used at the doses required for treatment." Still, despite the red flags that pointed to mefloquine as a high-risk drug, the DoD's mefloquine program proceeded.

In fact, a June 2004 set of guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says mefloquine should only be used when other standard drugs were not available, as it "is associated with a higher rate of severe neuropsychiatric reactions when used at treatment doses."

According to the CDC, "presumptive treatment" without the benefit of laboratory confirmation should be reserved for extreme circumstances (strong clinical suspicion, severe disease, impossibility of obtaining prompt laboratory confirmation)." A CDC spokesman refused to comment about the "presumptive treatment" of malaria at

Guantanamo and referred questions to the DoD.

Nevin said, if "mass presumptive treatment has been given consistently, many dozens of detainees, possibly hundreds, would almost certainly have suffered such disabling adverse events."

"It appears that for years, senior Defense health leaders have condoned the medically indefensible practice of using high doses of mefloquine ostensibly for mass presumptive treatment of malaria among detainees from the Middle East and Asia lacking any evidence of disease," Nevin said. "This is a use for which there is no precedent in the medical literature and which is specifically discouraged among refugees by malaria experts at the Centers for Disease Control."

Even proponents of limited mefloquine usage are seriously questioning the logic behind the DoD's actions. Professor James McCarthy, chair of the Infectious Diseases Division of the Queensland Institute of Medicine in Australia, who is an advocate of the safe use of mefloquine under proper safeguards, and takes it himself when traveling, said he was unaware of the use of mefloquine for mass presumptive treatment as described by the DoD, but could imagine it under certain circumstances.

However, when informed that lab tests were available and the detainees were screened for the blood product G6PD, used to determine the suitability of certain antimalarial drugs, McCarthy found the DoD's use of mefloquine at Guantanamo difficult to understand and "hard to sup-



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port on pure clinical grounds as an antimalarial.”

Treatment, Torture or Experiment?

Another striking point about the DoD’s decision to presumptively treat mostly Muslim detainees with mefloquine beginning in 2002 is that it is the exact opposite of how the DoD responded to malaria concerns among the Haitian refugees who were held at Guantanamo a decade earlier.

Between 1991 and 1992, more than 14,000 Haitian refugees were held in temporary camps set up at Guantanamo. A large number of Haitian refugees--235 during a four-month period--were diagnosed with malaria. But instead of presumptively treating the refugee population at Guantanamo, the DoD conducted laboratory tests first and only the individuals who were found to be malaria carriers were administered chloroquine.

Another example of how the DoD approached malaria treatment differently for other subjects is in the case of Army Rangers who returned from malarial areas of Afghanistan between June and September 2002 and were infected with the disease at an attack rate of 52.4 cases per 1,000 soldiers.

However, the Rangers did not receive mass presumptive treatment of mefloquine. They were given other standard drugs after laboratory tests, according to documents obtained.

Nevin said the DoD’s treatment of Haitian refugees represented “a situation that arguably presented a much higher risk of disease and secondary transmission, but one which US medical experts stated at the time could be safely managed through more conservative and focused measures.”

Why did the government use the “conservative and focused” approach in treating Haitian refugees and the Army Rangers, but then revert to presumptive mefloquine treatment in the case of the Guantanamo detainees, who--a month after the prison facility opened in January 2002--were stripped of their protections under the Geneva Conventions?

According to Sean Camoni, a Seton Hall University law school research fellow, “there is no legitimate medical purpose for treating malaria in this way” and the drug’s severe side effects may actually have been the DoD’s intended impact in calling for the drug’s usage.

Camoni and several other Seton Hall law school students have been working on a report about mefloquine use on Guantanamo detainees. Their work was conducted independently.

A copy of the Seton Hall report, “Drug Abuse? An Exploration of the Government’s Use of Mefloquine at Guantanamo,” says mefloquine’s extreme side effects may have violated a provision in the antitorture statute related to the use of “mind altering substances or other procedures” that “profoundly disrupts the senses or the personality.”

Legal memos prepared in August 2002 by former DoD attorneys Jay Bybee and John Yoo for the CIA’s tor-

ture program permitted the use of drugs for interrogations. The authority was also contained in a legal memo Yoo prepared for the DoD less than a year later after Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld convened a working group to address “policy considerations with respect to the choice of interrogation techniques.”

In September, *Truthout* reported that the DoD’s inspector general (IG) conducted an investigation into allegations that detainees in custody of the US military were drugged. The IG’s report, which remains classified, was completed a year ago and was shared with the Senate Armed Services Committee. Kathleen Long, a spokeswoman for the Armed Services Committee, told *Truthout* at the time that the IG report did not substantiate allegations of the drugging of prisoners for the “purposes of interrogation.”

The medical files for detainee 693 released in 2008 show that, two weeks after he first started taking mefloquine in June 2002, he was interviewed by Guantanamo medical personnel who reported he was suffering from nightmares, hallucinations, auditory and visual hallucinations, anxiety, sleep loss and suicidal thoughts.

The detainee said he had previously been treated for anxiety and had a family history of mental illness. He

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was diagnosed with adjustment disorder, according to the DoD documents. Guantanamo medical staff who interviewed the detainee did not state that he may have been experiencing mefloquine-related side effects in an evaluation of his condition.

Mark Denbeaux, the director of the Seton Hall Law Center for Policy and Research, who looked into the 2006 deaths of the three Guantanamo detainees, said in an interview “almost every remaining question here would be solved if the [detainees’] full medical records were released.”

The government has refused to release Guantanamo detainees’ medical records, citing privacy concerns in some cases, and assertions that they are “protected” or “classified” in others. The few medical records that have been released have been heavily redacted.

“A crucial issue is dosage” Denbeaux said. “Giving detainees toxic doses of mefloquine has mind-altering consequences that may be permanent. Without access to medical records, which the government refuses to release, the use of mefloquine in this manner appears to be grotesque malpractice at best, if not human experimentation or ‘enhanced interrogation.’ The question is where are the doctors who approved this practice and where are the medical records?”

Bradsher did not respond to questions about whether the government kept data about the adverse effects mefloquine had on detainees.

An absolute prohibition against experiments on prisoners of war is contained in the Geneva Conventions, but President George W. Bush stripped “war on terror” detainees of those protections. Some of the “enhanced interrogation techniques” also had an experimental quality.

At the same time detainees were given high doses of mefloquine, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz issued a directive changing the rules on human subject protections for DoD experiments, allowing for a waiver of informed consent when necessary for developing a “medical product” for the armed services. Bush also granted unprecedented authority to the Secretary of Health and Human Services to classify information as secret.

Side Effects Briefings

As the DoD was administering mefloquine to Guantanamo prisoners, senior Pentagon officials were being briefed about the drug’s dangerous side effects. During one such briefing, questions arose about what steps the military was taking to address malaria concerns among detainees sent to Guantanamo.

Internal documents from Roche, obtained by UPI in 2002, indicated that the pharmaceutical company had been tracking suicidal reactions to Lariam going back to the early 1990s.

In September 2002, Roche sent a letter to physicians and pharmacists stating that the company changed its warning labels for mefloquine.

Roche further said in one of two new warning paragraphs that some of the symptoms associated with

mefloquine use included suicidal thoughts and suicide and also “may cause psychiatric symptoms in a number of patients, ranging from anxiety, paranoia, and depression to hallucination and psychotic behavior,” which “have been reported to continue long after mefloquine has been stopped.”

Military Struggles

Cmdr. William Manofsky, who is retired from the US Navy and currently on disability due to post-traumatic stress disorder and side effects from mefloquine, said those are some of the symptoms he initially suffered after taking the drug for several months beginning in November 2002 after he was deployed to the Middle East to work on two Naval projects.

In March 2003, “I became violently ill during a night live-fire exercise with the [Navy] SEALs,” Manofsky said. “I felt like I was air sick. All the flashing lights from the tracers and rockets...targeting device made me really sick. I threw up for an hour straight before being medevac’d back to the Special Forces compound where I had my first ever panic attack.”

For three years, Manofsky said he had to walk with a cane due to a loss of equilibrium. Numerous other accounts like Manofsky’s can be found on the web site lariaminfo.org.

In 2008, Dr. Nevin published a study detailing a high prevalence of mental health contraindications to the safe use of mefloquine in soldiers deployed to Afghanistan. Responding in part to concerns raised by the mefloquine-associated suicide of Army Spc. Juan Torres, internal Army presentations confirmed that the drug had been widely misprescribed to soldiers with contraindications, including to many on antidepressants.

A formal policy memo in February 2009 from Army Surgeon General Eric Schoemaker removed mefloquine as a “first-line” agent, and changed the policy so that mefloquine would not be prescribed to Army personnel unless they had contraindications to the preferred drug, the antibiotic doxycycline. Nor could mefloquine be prescribed to any personnel with a history of traumatic brain injury or mental illness. By September 2009, the policy was extended throughout the DoD.

New prisoners are no longer arriving at Guantanamo and the prison population has been in decline in recent years as detainees are released or transferred to other countries. Currently, the detainee population at Guantanamo is 174.

But Nevin said the justification the Pentagon offered for using mefloquine to presumptively treat detainees transferred to the prison beginning in 2002 “betrays a profound ignorance of basic principles of tropical medicine and suggests extremely poor, and arguably incompetent, medical oversight that demands further investigation.”

Jason Leopold is deputy managing editor/reporter at *Truthout*. org. Jeffrey Kaye is a San Francisco-based psychologist and blogger.

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ASSANGE CHARGES INSULT RAPE VICTIMS

NAOMI WOLF

How do I know that Interpol, Britain and Sweden's treatment of Julian Assange is a form of theater? Because I know what happens in rape accusations against men that don't involve the embarrassing of powerful governments.

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange was held in solitary confinement in Wandsworth prison in advance of questioning on state charges of sexual molestation. Lots of people have opinions about the charges. But I increasingly believe that only those of us who have spent years working with rape and sexual assault survivors worldwide, and know the standard legal response to sex crime accusations, fully understand what a travesty this situation is against those who have to live through how sex crime charges are ordinarily handled--and what a deep, even nauseating insult this situation is to survivors of rape and sexual assault worldwide.

Here is what I mean: men are pretty much never treated the way Assange is being treated in the face of sex crime charges.

I started working as a counselor in a UK center for victims of sexual assault in my mid-twenties. I also worked as a counselor in a battered women's shelter in the US, where sexual violence was often part of the pattern of abuse. I have since spent two decades traveling the world reporting on and interviewing survivors of sexual assault, and their advocates, in countries as diverse as Sierra Leone and Morocco, Norway and Holland, Israel and Jordan and the Occupied Territories, Bosnia and Croatia, Britain, Ireland and the United States.

I tell you this as a recorder of firsthand accounts. Tens of thousands of teenage girls were kidnapped at gunpoint and held as sex slaves in Sierra Leone during that country's civil war. They were tied to trees and to stakes

in the ground and raped by dozens of soldiers at a time. Many of them were as young as twelve or thirteen. Their rapists are free.

I met a fifteen-year-old girl who risked her life to escape from her captor in the middle of the night, taking the baby that resulted from her rape by hundreds of men. She walked from Liberia to a refugee camp in Sierra Leone, barefoot and bleeding, living on roots in the bush. Her rapist, whose name she knows, is free.

Generals at every level instigated this country-wide sexual assault of a generation of girls. Their names are known. They are free. In Sierra Leone and Congo, rapists often used blunt or sharp objects to penetrate the vagina. Vaginal tears and injuries, called vaginal fistulas, are rampant, as any health worker in that region can attest, but medical care is often unavailable. So women who have been raped in this way often suffer from foul-smelling constant discharges from infections that could be treated with a low-cost antibiotic--were one available. Because of their injuries, they are shunned by their communities and rejected by their husbands. Their rapists are free.

Women--and girls--are drugged, kidnapped and trafficked by the tens of thousands for the sex industry in Thailand and across Eastern Europe. They are held as virtual prisoners by pimps. If you interview the women who spend their lives trying to rescue and rehabilitate them, they attest to the fact that these women's kidnappers and rapists are well known to local and even national authorities--but these men never face charges. These rapists are free.

In the Bosnian conflict, rape was a weapon of war. Women were imprisoned in barracks utilized for this purpose, and raped, again at gunpoint, for weeks at a time. They could not escape. Minimalist hearings after the conflict resulted in slap-on-the-wrist sentences for a handful of perpetrators.

The vast majority of rapists, whose names are known, did not face charges. The military personnel that condoned these assaults, and whose names are known, are free.

Women who testify to having been raped in Saudi Arabia, Syria and Morocco face imprisonment and beatings, and abandonment by their families. Their rapists almost never face charges and are free. Women who testify to rape in India and Pakistan have been subjected to honor

**Never in twenty-three
years of reporting on
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without bail in advance
of being questioned...**

--Naomi Wolf

killings and acid attacks. Their rapists almost never face charges, are almost never convicted. They are free. A well-known case of a high-born playboy in India who was accused of violently raping a waitress--who was willing to testify against him--resulted in a cover-up at the highest levels of the police inquiry. He is free.

What about more typical cases closer to home? In the Western countries such as Britain and Sweden, who are uniting to hold Assange, if you actually interviewed women working in rape crisis centers, you will hear this: it is desperately hard to get a conviction for a sex crime, or even a serious hearing. Workers in rape crisis centers in the UK and Sweden will tell you that they have deep backlogs of women raped for years by fathers or stepfathers--who can't get justice. Women raped by groups of young men who have been drinking, and thrown out of the backs of cars, or abandoned after a gang-rape in an alley--who can't get justice. Women raped by acquaintances who can't get a serious hearing.

In the US I have heard from dozens of young women who have been drugged and raped in college campuses across the nation. There is almost inevitably a cover-up by the university--guaranteed if their assailants are prominent athletes on campus, or affluent--and their rapists are free. If it gets to police inquiry, it seldom gets very far. Date rape? Forget it. If a woman has been drinking, or has previously had consensual sex with her attacker, or if there is any ambiguity about the issue of consent, she almost never gets a serious hearing or real investigation.

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If the rare middle-class woman who charges rape against a stranger—for those inevitably are the few and rare cases that the state bothers to hear—actually gets treated seriously by the legal system, she will nonetheless find inevitable hurdles to any kind of real hearing let alone real conviction: either a ‘lack of witnesses’ or problems with evidence, or else a discourse that even a clear assault is racked with ambiguity. If, even more rare, a man is actually convicted—it will almost inevitably be a minimal sentence, insulting in its triviality, because no one wants to ‘ruin the life’ of a man, often a young man, who has ‘made a mistake’. (The few exceptions tend to regard a predictable disparity of races—black men do get convicted for assault on higher-status white women whom they do not know.)

In other words: Never in twenty-three years of reporting on and supporting victims of sexual assault around the world have I heard of a case of a man sought by two nations, and held in solitary confinement without bail in advance of being questioned—for any alleged rape, even the most brutal or easily proven. In terms of a case involving the kinds of ambiguities and complexities of the alleged victims’ complaints—sex that began consensually that allegedly became non-consensual when dispute arose around a condom—please find me, anywhere in the world, another man in prison today without bail on charges of anything comparable.

Of course ‘No means No’, even after consent has been given, whether you are male or female; and of course

condoms should always be used if agreed upon. As my fifteen-year-old would say: Duh.

But for all the tens of thousands of women who have been kidnapped and raped, raped at gunpoint, gang-raped, raped with sharp objects, beaten and raped, raped as children, raped by acquaintances—who are still awaiting the least whisper of justice—the highly unusual reaction of Sweden and Britain to this situation is a slap in the face. It seems to send the message to women in the UK and Sweden that if you ever want anyone to take a sex crime against you seriously, you had better be sure the man you accuse of wrongdoing has also happened to embarrass the most powerful government on earth.

Keep Assange in prison without bail until he is questioned, by all means, if we are suddenly in a real feminist worldwide epiphany about the seriousness of the issue of sex crime: but Interpol, Britain and Sweden must, if they are not to be guilty of hateful manipulation of a serious women’s issue for cynical political purposes, imprison as well—at once—the hundreds of thousands of men in Britain, Sweden and around the world who are accused in far less ambiguous terms of far graver forms of assault.

Anyone who works in supporting women who have been raped knows from this grossly disproportionate response that Britain and Sweden, surely under pressure from the US, are cynically using the serious issue of rape as a fig leaf to cover the shameful issue of mafioso-like global collusion in silencing dissent. That is not the State embracing feminism. That is the State pimping feminism.

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FOX NEWS DIVIDE THAT NEVER WAS

SARAH PAVLUS

The internal divisions at Fox News are notorious. There is the *Fox News Primary*, in which no fewer than five potential Republican presidential candidates and their varied supporters and detractors--all on the Fox News payroll--duke it out on a near-daily basis.

There are typical ego-driven competitions between on-air personalities, and an increasingly public divide at the network over dangerously unhinged host Glenn Beck.

But there is one divide that--contrary to the insistence of Fox News executives--simply does not exist: the one between its "news" and "opinion" shows.

Last year, *The New York Times* reported, "Fox argues that its news hours--9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and 6 to 8 p.m. on weekdays--are objective," and quoted Michael Clemente, the channel's senior vice president for news, as saying: "The average consumer certainly knows the difference between the A section of the newspaper and the editorial page."

This is apparently an argument that works only on the very gullible, and on advertisers who want to pretend that by confining their ad buys to the channel's "news hours" they are not financially supporting very damaging conservative lies and smears.

How telling it will be to see who attempts to maintain this charade, now that we have internal emails from Fox News Washington managing editor Bill Sammon to his *news staff* directing them to call into question *indisputable scientific facts* in Fox's climate change reporting, and eschew "public option" for variations of "government option" in Fox's health care reform reporting, echoing advice from a prominent Republican pollster on how to help turn the public against reform.

The recently-released emails confirm what was known months ago:

Pressure on Fox News journalists to "distort" straight reporting comes right from the top.

In October, one source with knowledge of the situation explained: "[There is] more pressure from Sammon to slant news to the right or to tell people how to report news, doing it in a more brutish way. A lot of the reporters are conservative and are glad to pick up news. But there is a point at which it is no longer reporting, but distorting things... [I]f you

**...many
advertisers have
taken a step
in the right
direction by
refusing to
support some
of Fox News'
deplorable
'opinion' and
'entertainment'
shows...**

--Sarah Pavlus

come in to say, 'ignore points of view and ignore facts,' then you are straying away from being a legitimate news reporter."

The problem, of course, is not just that the reporting on Fox News is wildly dishonest--after all, a supermarket tabloid can be wildly dishon-

est, too--it's that the lies and smears on Fox News have very real policy implications.

For example, following the release of Sammon's email ordering his news staff to cast doubt on climate science, Zoe Tcholak-Antitch, vice-president of the Carbon Disclosure Project, said: "It is very disturbing to hear of this e-mail because it just goes further to sow seeds of doubt among the American population then makes it more difficult for the politicians to stand up for any type of legislation on climate change if they want to get elected."

Tcholak-Antitch added: "It obviously does have an impact on the American public. We are facing an issue that needs to be dealt with in a timely fashion. The danger is that this delays action. While it exists, it delays action and it hinders politicians from passing laws and regulations that will help a clean energy economy and create jobs for American people."

The irony is that News Corp.--Fox News' parent company and (the blind eye it turns towards Fox notwithstanding) a recognized corporate leader in raising climate change awareness--cites Tcholak-Antitch's Carbon Disclosure Project as an expert resource on the issue.

New York Congressman John Hall--a Democratic member of the House global warming committee--called Sammon's email "regrettable" and warned about the effects this sort of "slanted" coverage has on legislation:

"The window of time we have left for action to prevent the worst case scenario may still be closing...We can't afford to waste two years if the changes are already happening. It is really important that the public gets educated. I do think Congress responds to public pressure. If the public is being misinformed, we have very little chance of reversing the trend."

Similarly, after Sammon's "government option" email was released, health care reform advocate Health Care for America Now issued a statement saying: "At a time when right-wing extremists were trying to make the case that the health care re-

form bill was a government takeover plot, Fox News incorporated politically charged language into its day-to-day reporting to mislead its audience into thinking the public option was something that it wasn't."

Indeed, the Pulitzer Prize-winning PolitiFact announced this week that its "Lie of the Year" is the false claim that the health care reform law is "a government takeover of health care." And yet, Fox News' "objective" reporters were ordered to play directly into that damaging narrative.

To be sure, many advertisers have taken a step in the right direction by refusing to support some of Fox News' deplorable "opinion" and "entertainment" shows--after all, who wants to drag a hard-earned (and valuable) brand identity through the mud by associating it with people who call the president racist, or repeatedly claim, "all terrorists are Muslim," or promote anti-Semites, or engage in bizarre conspiracy theories?

In fact, just this week, Omaha

Steaks pulled its ads from Beck's show, joining a growing list of over 100 advertisers that have done the same.

But while that may mean that Fox is forced to air "Foundation for a Better Life" commercials--courtesy of conservative Philip Anschutz--five times in a row during Beck's show, it doesn't stop advertisers from subsidizing the lies on dozens of other Fox programs.

When asked several months ago about the Beck advertising boycott, Rupert Murdoch claimed, "We have not lost any business at all; some [advertisers] may have moved to other programs," but "it has not affected the total revenues or the profits."

Last year, Paul Rittenberg, a Fox advertising executive, made the same point to the *Times*. The Beck boycott "caus[ed] headaches" for Rittenberg's team, the *Times* reported, but "he said Fox 'hasn't lost a dime' because the ads were moved to different hours"--presumably hours filled with so-called "objective" news re-

ports that skittish advertisers thought were safely non-controversial.

A year ago, these advertisers may have been able to take false comfort in the Fox News canard that there exists any sort of division between Fox news and Fox opinion programming, but with the release of the Sammon emails, how long will they keep kidding themselves?

Sarah Pavlus is a columnist at *MediaMatters.org*.

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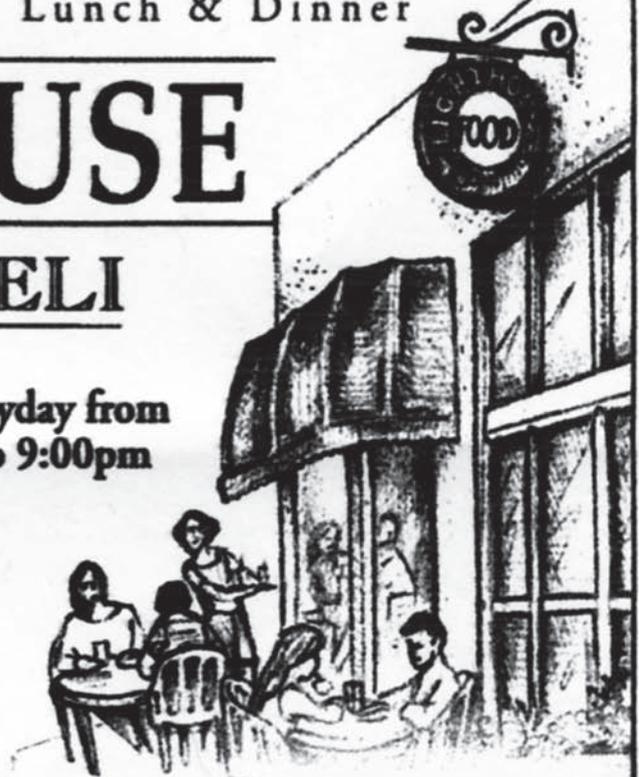
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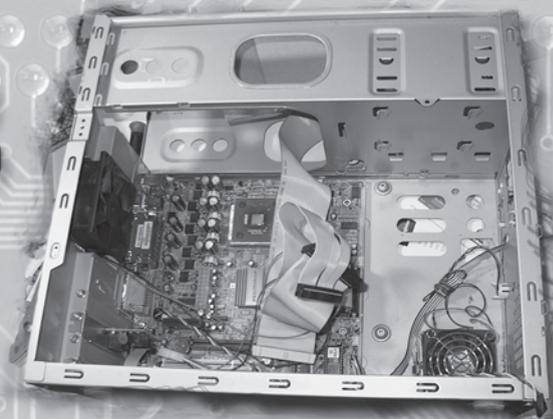
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THE REVOLUTIONARY MOMENT

JAMES HOWARD KUNSTLER

I overheard a conversation between two employees over at the Price Chopper supermarket last week. (The Price Chopper logo is a picture of a Mercury dime with an ax cleaving into Mercury's head; in other words, an ax murder.) The supermarket employees were both middle-aged women.

First: "I'm going home to a cold house."

Second: "Why don't you turn up the heat?"

First: "I don't have no money for fuel."

Meanwhile, 175 miles south in Manhattan somewhere, Lloyd Blankfein's personal shopper is trying to figure out whether to buy Lloyd's favorite niece a Fabergé egg themed Memories of Azov or a Jaguar XK convertible. Maybe the catch here is that the anonymous supermarket workers are only freezing this Christmas season. If they were freezing and hungry, it might be a different story. But, working in a supermarket, a person might find a way to cadge a few tidbits here and there (whoops, we broke a bag of Cheetos on the loading dock)--the catch there being you could get fired for stealing the merchandise. O sorry nation!

But don't fear! The president and congress are looking out for you, O nation of freezing supermarket employees (and flummoxed personal shoppers, and wily mega-bank CEOs)! They have fashioned a deal that we might call Stim-u-rama. Everybody gets a tax cut! Everybody! Not just Lloyd B but all you toiling and moiling shelf-stockers and check-out cashiers. Plus, you will get a reduction of several percentage points in your payroll deductions--a redoo in the dedoo!--which must be good for at least one Justin Bieber action figure (if there are any left!) in these waning days of the Yuletide consumer frenzy.

Meanwhile moreover,

60-Minutes showed a segment Sunday night on the rip-roaring economic miracle of Brazil--"a little bit bigger than the USA geographically and loaded with natural resources"--as if to rub it in that we have become a sorry nation of losers to a bunch of no-account beach layabouts. As usual, the 60-Minutes reportage was full of lies and misrepresentations, for instance, that Brazil's offshore oil discoveries are so huge and so easy to extract that they will save industrial civilization.

The sights and smells of Christmas usually put me in a mellow frame of mind. But this year there's an acid edge in the mulled wine, an off-taste in the plum pudding, a dis-

...the Federal Reserve's recent QE announcements represent a mighty effort to stuff some spendable lucre into this shuddering, doddering beast of the American economy.

-- James Howard Kunstler

concerting odor of rot in the piped-in holiday potpourri.

Obviously, the government tax deal along with the Federal Reserve's recent QE announcements represent a mighty effort to stuff some spendable lucre into this shuddering, doddering beast of the American economy. The people running things

don't know what else to do. We find ourselves in a decelerating system, hopelessly over-complex (and scheming, even, to add additional layers of complexity!), with money-making activity shifted from producing things of value into a runaway Wall Street machine dedicated to something-for-nothing rentier exploitation of interest rate differentials, arbitrages, short-sales, outright swindles, and other activities based on no creation of value whatsoever. While capital piles up in the salons of Central Park West and the cigar cellars of the Hamptons, social capital hemorrhages every day as masses of formerly-working Americans forego the acquisition of any useful skills, or forget old ones, or opt to lose themselves in the transports of methadine, "reality" TV, and tattoo art. To put it perhaps a bit indelicately, our shit is falling apart.

It's fascinating that in the background of all this the price of oil is fibrillating around \$90-a-barrel--and nobody is paying any attention to that. We seem to have forgotten the lesson from back in 2008 that when oil gets above the \$80 mark, things in this land of Happy Motoring and the Warehouse-on-wheels don't work so well. No wonder President Obama and congress are trying to stuff the country full of sugar plums just to get past the horror of a Christmas holiday when not a few working people will be freezing in their homes, if they have homes.

And in not too many days ahead we'll get a peek at those Christmas

bonuses landing in the laps of Lloyd Blankfein's minions at Goldman Sachs and the rest of the geniuses in the engine room of prosperity.

When I was already a grown-up young newspaper reporter thirty-odd years ago, I never dreamed I'd see a revolutionary moment here in the USA--even with old Nixie pull-

ing one fast one after another, before heading off to that helicopter for his

last wave to the people who elected him. Now, I'm not so sure.

James Kunstler's recent book is *The Witch of Hebron*. Kunstler.com.

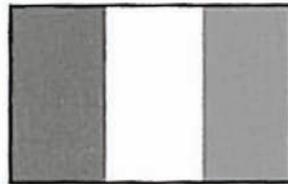
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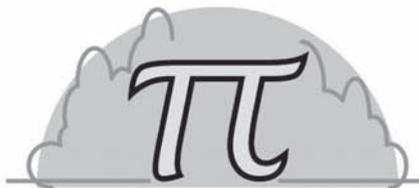
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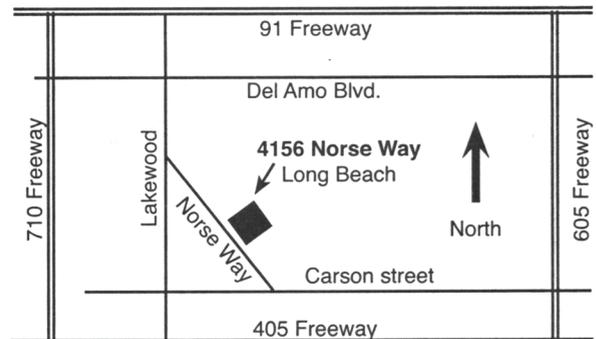
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We've become obsessed with our physical and spiritual health, virtual slaves to workout regimens and blueprints for better souls from religious leaders and spiritual healers. And for good reason since there's lots of bad food out there, not to mention some pretty toxic ideas. As a society we need good spiritual direction in this time of crisis.

We usually try to heal our bodies and spirits separately, keeping in touch with our maker once a week, reserving some treadmill time here, doing some calorie reduction there, but miss how the two are connected. As the cliché goes, we are what we eat. If we overindulge on brunch too often after Sunday services, maybe we'll get brain-cell bloat.

Sharon Kim, owner of Sura in the arts district, serves up a feast for body and spirit, showing that the path to health and enlightenment needs nutrients from both. She's been at it now since Sura opened nearly two years ago. If this restaurateur seems like a preacher, well all the better since she's also a pastor at the Celebration Church here in Long Beach where she started a mission. Reaching out to people in need is natural for her, and preceded the restaurant. She has experience helping the homeless and recovering addicts, and has even provided jobs at the restaurant to get them on their feet.

It's no surprise that Martin Luther King is her muse, believing passionately in the dream of using the power of god to put abstract principles into practice and help those in need. This is all consistent with her church. Focus on the little things in the everyday that people can use to change their lives; construct a better sense of self. Sharon is no evangelical who panders biblical banter to the choir. She's a social worker committed to carrying Christ's example to her flock. This is mostly teens, and especially Asian teens from Poly and Wilson High Schools.

They started coming around

in their free time after school a while ago to check out her fresh and healthy food, and Sharon's interactive skills with customers took over. She lent her friendly ear and they formed what she describes as a natural bond, becoming mother, mentor and friend to them. She feels divinely destined to help them.

For her, mothering and mentoring go together. She has to mother them to teach them. The kids call her

One of her dreams is to have a "Youth Center" that brings different ethnic groups together so they'll feel comfortable relating to each other, and make communication easier. There are many empty buildings downtown that can be used for things like a computer lab, GED classes, art and dance studios and a skate park. She and a group of local pastors are now looking at an empty hotel as a possible site. And she plans to meet



photo by John O'Kane

"Umma," mother in Korean. They need the confidence of belonging to appreciate her examples about making the right choices. She guides them in their career goals and day-to-day issues involving home or peers. She's the mother they can turn to who's not your typical mother!

Sympathetic with their lives as youths, she hangs out with them and helps them connect. Several belong to the Korean Pop Club through their schools. It performs Hip Hop dance competitions at the local K Pop Festival. True to form Sharon helps them with their dance events through motivation, emotional support and an adjacent room in her restaurant for practice.

She even organizes field trips. Every Sunday they go to China Town or Korea Town, maybe the Korean market or even Forever 21.

with councilman Robert Garcia soon for assistance. She's also in contact with the community group "Connected Corridor" for help in providing safe places to gather after school.

Meanwhile Sharon is doing her multicultural part in bringing Korean cuisine to these kids, and Sura--one of a few Korean restaurants in Long Beach--will have to do for a center that nurtures an extended family for now.

I've had the pleasure of eating twice at Sura and each was tantalizingly memorable. The first time I had her most popular dish, Korean Tacos. Korean Tacos?! A cultural experience indeed. They come in twos as an appetizer portion, but you can easily make a meal with a few more. They're made with beef from a dish Sharon calls Bulgogi. The beef is marinated for hours in twelve differ-

ent spices. The tacos are presented on two baby corn tortillas, and include sweet and sour cabbage, fresh cilantro and are topped with homemade hot sauce. Mouth watering! Sharon says this dish helped Sura get on the map.

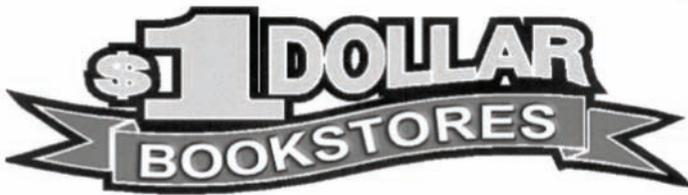
Bulgogi is delicious in itself. It's mildly sweet with just a bit of spiciness to it. I'm not a big meat eater but neither I nor my carnivorous friend who accompanied me could stop nibbling at it. Its taste makes you want more! We also had a vegetarian dish called Japche made with glass noodles, julienne vegetables including shitake and black mushrooms, Korean radishes, cucumbers and more in a soy sauce. It's very light yet savory. Quite succulent.

We also had Kimchi made from cabbage, and homemade red sauce made with red bean and red cherry paste. If you like Kimchi you'll love this one. It's tangy and refreshes the palate to make room for more Bulgogi! She also served sides of stir fried yams with potatoes, garlic and salt, as well as bean sprouts and a zesty sweet and sour cucumber dish. And how unbelievably fresh everything was. A feast for our taste buds.

Finally, I really enjoyed another main course called Hot Stone Bibimbap. It is white rice mixed with shitake and black mushrooms, bean sprouts, cabbage, zucchini, carrots and many more fresh veggies seasoned and marinated Korean-style.

This is served in an extremely hot stone bowl that keeps the food inside cooking while it's served. It comes with a raw egg on the side which you crack over the food in the hot stone bowl and the heat from the bowl cooks it in seconds. Liberally sprinkle Sharon's homemade hot sauce over it and you have healthy cuisine.

All the side dishes and appetizers are vegetarian and there are ample vegan dishes also. Sharon serves organic coffee with a hearty and distinct flavor. And she has catered many events here in Long Beach. Sura boast's a four and 1/2 star review on YELP. It's on Facebook and you can also find coupons for Sura on restaurant.com. See ad for Sura in this issue.



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LONG BEACH MUSIC SCENE: ALYSSANDRA NIGHSWONGER

GREGGORY MOORE

The entire reason I'm writing this column is because Long Beach has a fantastic, interconnected music scene. And Alyssandra Nighswonger knows that as well as anybody.

About three years ago, six months after she began hosting *Viento y Agua's* open-mic night, Nighswonger got an itch to create projects and events incorporating different combinations of musicians culled from the broad swath of artistry she was encountering all the time.

"I had this whole plan," she remembers. "We were all on this track where we didn't quite know how to promote ourselves." Her first idea was to form a Long Beach musicians' collective—have a photo shoot, compilation album, Website, etc. "Then I wanted to plan this big festival. But I didn't want it to be just a concert; I wanted it to be a total feast for the senses: art installations, yoga on the law, face-painting, crafts for kids to do, a book lounge, tea...everything."

For better or for worse, simply aligning the stars of her own musical projects got in the way. Chief among those was recording the self-titled debut album by Alyssandra & the Daymakers, whose Shel Silverstein/Harry Nilsson-inspired songwriting *sounds something like what we might have expected if the music of Tom Waits and Kate Bush had hooked up and made elegant, folky babies.*

Nighswonger had been writing songs since 2004. Initially she was too intimidated to share her stuff, but she felt getting over that hang-up was the only way she was going to grow musically. "So I went to a jam night at *Viento y Agua* and met Ellen there," she says, referring to Long Beach theatrical musical mainstay Ellen Warkentine, a songwriting part-

ner Nighswonger reveres for (among other things) her fantastic improvisational abilities, a talent Nighswonger confesses to lack completely. "I really liked the way she played piano and the way that she sang, her voice and character. I really wanted to play music with her, but I didn't know how to just ask somebody to play in my band. I had kind of a friend-crush on her. But a week later she sent me a message on MySpace that says, 'Dear Alyssandra, I'm officially in your band. Love, Ellen.' Easy peasy!"

The Daymakers were rounded out when she reconnected musically with a childhood friend, drummer Travis Christopherson; and when Doug Smith, bassist for Boris Smile, offered to fill in the band's low end.

After 18 months of recording, mixing, and mastering the album at no less than five different studios "just working off of favors"—a potential recipe for disaster that managed to yield a finely cohesive and unified piece of work—Nighswonger turned her attention to the album-release show, dusting off her dreams of capitalizing on all that Long Beach talent. "I wanted to have this big spectacle, but I wanted to have the vibe of Korey Dane's album-release show at {open}," she relates, recalling Dane's show at the hip bookstore/performance space—held the same night as 2009's *Zombie Walk* (with people in costume getting discounted admission)—as a "really surreal, really beautiful night. The whole audience went through an experience together. [...] I decided that what I wanted to create was some sort of crazy hybrid between the Ziegfeld Follies and *The Last Waltz*. I wanted this cool, vibey, old-timey spectacle meets *heart* and genuine appreciation and humbleness."

Thus was the "Vaudeville-Folk Spectacular" at the Art Theatre, with A&theD more as host than headliner, sharing the bill not only with first-rate musical acts like *Miniature Houses* and *Pebaluna*, but recitations of Russian absurdist prose and Dr. Seuss, tap dancers, poets, and even "amazing feats of strength by Strong

Bear." (Read about the event at lbpost.com/life/greggory/10421.) The hundreds who turned out got the experience Nighswonger envisioned. It was a good night for Long Beach.

After such a success, "my plan was to take October and do nothing, do absolutely nothing," she confesses. "But I can't do that." Which is a good thing, because opportunity came knocking immediately in yet another example of Long Beach synergy, when the special events coordinator at the Long Beach Museum of Art, mightily impressed with the spectacular Spectacular, inquired about Nighswonger putting together a similar event at the LBMA.

Thus was born "Illuminary Interlude" and its face-painting, shadow portraits, 10-minute, wordless, shadow-puppet interpretation of Eugene Ionesco's *Rhinoceros* (replete with actors, a foley artist, and a live score by A&theD), and great music, including a closing set by Tiger Tank euphoria complemented by fire-dancing. "I just love painting a crazy idea in my head and having it actually happen," she says.

In the middle of all of this Nighswonger's unmistakable warble-thrush was featured at an event she *didn't* put on, *Lyons at Night*, with her grittier, more down-home project Poe and the Nightingale (a duo with Adam Poe). And then there's her ad hoc project that's about to begin a six-month run as the house band at the Annabella Hotel in Anaheim.

And *then* there's the songwriter-heavy, as-yet-unnamed band she's starting up with David Robison, Lexi Lee, Merrady Wicks. The music? "Some kind of folky explosion, like Devendra Banhart meets Elliott Smith meets the Carter Family meets Nancy Sinatra. [...] Of course it's gonna be kind of folky, because that's what I do."

Plus, plans are in the works for another event or two at the Art Theatre, and one at the LBMA. Because that's what Nighswonger does. And you ought not to miss it. Find her and her music on MySpace, Facebook, iTunes, etc.



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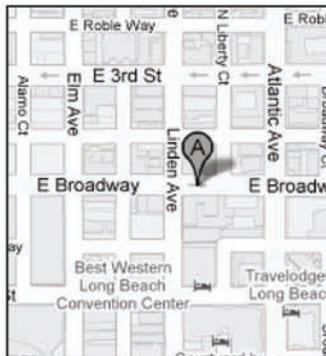
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