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Firedoglake - Firedoglake weblog

VA-Gov: Meet Bob McDonnell, Anti-Equality Zealot

August 15, 2009 at 9:00 pm

Bob McDonnell, the GOP's candidate for governor against Creigh Deeds, has undergone a thorough extremist-washing in the media covering the gubernatorial campaign. It's important for Virginia voters to know that McDonnell is a right-wing extremist. Here are the first three of eight handy reminders from blogger [Michael in Norfolk](#):

- 1) Bob McDonnell earned his law degree from Pat Robertson's Regent University Law School where he was taught to "think Christianly about the law." Regent's goal has always been to train lawyers to move into government office and take over the reins to further the Christianists' goals and Biblical world view.
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- 2) In 2003, McDonnell opposed the reappointment of Newport News Circuit Court Judge Verbena Askew, the first black female circuit court judge in the Commonwealth of Virginia, on the basis that she was rumored to be a lesbian and therefore may have violated Virginia's "Crimes against Nature" statute which was struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court later that same year in the Lawrence v. Texas decision.
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- 3) In 2004, McDonnell wrote and sponsored the anti-gay HB 187 bill, a rudimentary precursor to the Virginia Marriage Amendment that passed in November 2006.

If you are or know a Virginia voter, please take the time to read all of Michael's post [at the link](#). There's a reason the GOP nominee is nicknamed "Taliban Bob." And there's a reason the GOP is making every effort to clean up McDonnell's record and reputation.

The Cost Of Obama's Beer Fest Failure Is More Tasered Moms

August 15, 2009 at 8:00 pm

I wrote a series of posts about the incident surrounding Harvard Professor Henry Louis Gates. [First](#), it was an illegal and unconstitutional arrest because of the abuse of police power and discretion. [Second](#), irrespective of whether it was a racially motivated moment, it was one from which serious discussion could, and should, ensue. [Third](#), that it was a teaching moment being given short shrift by the clumsy way Barack Obama inserted himself into it and then tried to extricate himself through the bogus "beer summit".

The thing that got me up in arms, from the start, is the undeniable fact that Gates' arrest was illegal and an abuse of police power. As I described, take Gates' conduct at its worst as described by the Cambridge police report, and the conduct simply does not meet the elements of disorderly conduct as arrested and charged on under the Massachusetts statute. There was no probable cause or legal basis for the arrest; it was simply a case of contempt of cop, and Sergeant Crowley decided to use the time honored police way of dealing with citizens in such situations, he abused his authority and badge by arresting the citizen.

The only thing unique about the Gates case is that it ended without serious harm to the citizen and it pierced the national conscience. The same base conduct plays out every minute of every day somewhere in the US. But the Gates/Crowley moment appears to have been lost without any intelligent discussion of the rampant abuse of police power and authority. Save for the opinions of Jonathan Turley and Jeff Toobin, which were minimized by MSNBC and CNN television coverage, there was precious little recognition by major media outlets of the root point of police power abuse.

Well, the scene in the video attached hereto is what happens in a society that refuses to address overreaching authoritarianism and unrestrained police projection. [Moms with kids in minivans get Tasered](#) and roughed up. In front of their children. Why? Because the cops can with relative impunity. The "Blue Line" circles the wagons around their fellow officers, prosecutors need their cooperation for prosecution and trials in actual major cases, and politicians are too cravenly worried about their next election to care. As [Digby says](#):

If this is what they do when they have a video camera rolling in their own car, what do you suppose happens when one isn't?

I guess the taser saved the officer the physical effort of hitting her over the head with his baton or shooting her to gain compliance, so that's good.

No kidding. By the way, [Digby](#) writes relentlessly on the misuse and abuse of Taser devices by police around the country and every post is chilling and worth reading.

Jeffrey Kaye gave a [wonderful quote](#) in the last post that touches on the broader phenomenon:

I think it's something worse, a continuing creeping totalitarianism. On one side it's state-sponsored, in the sense of violations of civil liberties, the solidification of the surveillance state, further intrusiveness into private lives and behaviors. On this score, one can find common ground with right-

wing libertarians. On the other side, it's a failure by the civil establishment, who have sided with fear: fear to speak out, fear of the truth, fear of loss of comfort, fear of what will happen to our children, fear of isolation, fear that life will end too soon and we will have missed out, fear of living fully and fear of dying.

And this is the greater discussion we were kept from having by Obama's personal insertion and extrication of himself in the Gates incident. Abuse of police power and authority is a huge problem in this country and we need to have that discussion. Craven Republicans croon the fraudulent meme about pulling the plug on Grandma; what about the real electrical plugs being fired into Mom?

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Netroots Nation '09 - More Photographs from Eli

August 15, 2009 at 7:00 pm

More terrific Netroots photos from Eli:

01

02

Lots more over at Eli's home blog, multi-medium.net

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FDL Book Salon Welcomes Richard McCormack, Editor of Manufacturing a Better Future for America

August 15, 2009 at 5:00 pm

[Welcome [Richard McCormack](#), [Scott Paul](#), and [Clyde Prestowitz](#), Hosted by Marcy - bev]

Since last November, I have unexpectedly found myself blogging the auto crisis and bailout. Between my five years consulting internationally for an automotive company and living in Michigan, I seemed to have the ability to explain the larger causes of the crisis that were largely missed elsewhere in the blogosphere and much of the traditional media. Yet while I could explain how America's expensive health care and China's burgeoning auto industry played a role in the crisis, I always felt like I didn't really have the details to describe precisely how our own economic policies have led to the gutting of our manufacturing industries and the auto crisis.

[Manufacturing A Better Future for America](#) provides those details.

The book consists of a series of papers, largely by academics, covering all aspects of the plight of American manufacturing: an overview, a history of US trade policy, a description of how our trading partners cheat, a consideration of what happens when R&D investment moves overseas, a description of deindustrialization on the local and national level, and so on.

The book is thick with data capturing the plight of American manufacturing. This passage, for example, uses shipping container volume to show that the US exports little else tangible besides waste paper, while importing huge amounts of consumer goods.

The largest U.S. exporter via ocean container was not even an American company, but Chinese: American Chung Nam, which exported 211,300 containers of waste paper to its Chinese sister company, Nine Dragons Paper Industries.

Weyerhaeuser was America's second largest exporting company via ocean container in 2007, shipping 165,800 containers filled with paper. Most all of this paper is remanufactured into cardboard to pack valuable manufactured goods for shipment back to the United States. Like the millions of products headed to American shores, it is cheaper to manufacture cardboard in China than in the United States.

Only one of the top 20 U.S. exporters via ocean container--Procter & Gamble--could be considered a U.S.-based product manufacturer.

Few of America's top corporate giants were shipping manufactured goods via containers to overseas markets. General Electric was ranked only in the 23rd position in 2007 among American exporters shipping 41,200 containers. But GE imported three times that amount--112,900 containers--and was ranked in 11th place among importers.

Caterpillar, which is one of America's most successful international companies, was in 27th place among exporters (shipping 37,300 containers) behind 12 wastepaper exporters, according to [the Port Import Export Reporting Service]. General Motors ranked in 68th place, selling little overseas from its U.S. factories: and Deere & Co. ranked in 77th place. The only other U.S. manufacturing company on the container-exporting list was Whirlpool, which ranked 83rd.

Imports into the United States via container ships are another matter. The largest importer in 2007 was Wal-Mart. The world's largest company (with sales in 2007 of \$374.5 billion), imported 720,000 containers of products from overseas markets, followed by Target (435,000 containers), Home Depot (365,300 containers) and Sears, which owns K-Mart (at 248,600). The combined imports of these four retail companies (1,768,900 containers) equaled the exports of containers for the top 21 U.S. exporting companies, again, the majority of which sold paper.

It's easy to attribute this imbalance to labor cost. But that tells a small part of the story:

The least of American companies' worries is competing with low-wage labor. The labor cost in a coil of steel produced in the United States is less than the freight cost of a steel coil imported from China, according to Nucor CEO Dan DiMarco. Foreign producers receive subsidies, tax

abatements, free buildings, free energy. They do not pay taxes. They don't have to pay Social Security, workman's comp, disability, or health care. They don't have to match a 401(k) contribution. They are able to avoid more than 100 years of government regulations put on American businesses. OSHA does not exist in most developing nations. They use electricity that would never be allowed to be generated in the United States due to lack of pollution controls. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency employs 17,000 workers. China's State Environmental Protection Administration employs only 300.

Perhaps more important than graphically describing what we all know--that we don't "make" much anymore as a country--the book also describes the risks of this reality, as we increasingly lose our leadership position in technology, even high-skilled jobs are shipped overseas, and we can't even sustain our defense industries with our own manufacturing base.

In other words, [*Manufacturing a Better Future*](#) provides a wonky, very current (it was written after last year's Wall Street crisis) assessment of the current troubles with American manufacturing.

The book, though, is part of a larger effort on the part of the [Alliance for American Manufacturing](#) (a partnership between some US manufacturers and the Steelworkers) to do something about it. AAM has, in turn, partnered with the progressive group [Campaign for America's Future](#), to start [Making it in America](#), which aims to spur a real public debate about the future of American manufacturing and, with it, our entire economy (I will be doing some blogging on this project). As such, the book aspires to support a much larger conversation.

That said, there are parts of the book that make for tough slogging. For those unfamiliar with the existing manufacturing supply chain (from my auto blogging, I realize that includes a lot of people in the blogosphere and policy world), that chapter relies on a lot of jargon; and I made mr. emptywheel, who is a mechanical engineer, walk me through some details of the defense industrial base chapter. And there are some related issues that get little or no notice: aside from a discussion of energy generally and the role of petroleum in our trade deficit with Mexico and Canada, there's no discussion of the role of petroleum in our larger balance of trade. There's no discussion of how our choice to extend empire-like dominance over much of the world dictated our domestic manufacturing choices and our larger trade policies. And there's little discussion of how a similar lag in broadband and other telecom investment contributes to making us uncompetitive globally.

But since the book is intended to be part of larger conversation, I'm sure those things can and will be included in that conversation. So let's welcome Richard McCormack, editor of [Manufacturing a Better Future](#); Robert Borosage, co-director of Campaign for America's Future; and Scott Paul, Executive Director of the Alliance for American Manufacturing, to our conversation.

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Disease and Disadvantage in the United States and in England

August 15, 2009 at 4:18 pm

That's the title of [a study](#) published by [The Journal of the American Medical Association](#). The study attempted to determine whether the "considerably greater" US health expenditure of US\$5274 per capita vs the UK per capita expenditure of US\$ 2164 resulted in a better health outcome for Americans.

Not even slightly surprisingly it doesn't. It's bad, shockingly bad. How Bad? This bad:

The top of your American society is as unhealthy as the bottom of their British one.

The United State has a considerably greater expenditure on medical care (US \$5274 per capita) than in the United Kingdom (US \$2164 adjusting for purchasing power). To determine whether that expenditure translates into better health outcomes for the adult US population, data on the degree of morbidity in each country beyond the childhood years are needed.

Given the strong link between socioeconomic position and health in both countries, cross-country comparisons of morbidity should examine variation of morbidity according to comparable measures of socioeconomic position. Cross-country comparison of social differences in illness provides some insight into potential causal explanations. Access to health care is a particular case in point. Although publicly funded health care is available in both countries to citizens older than 65 years, the UK National Health Service has no age criterion for eligibility. Thus, British households are more isolated from any financial impacts of out-of-pocket medical expenses. A similar argument applies to earnings and job losses, for which the more generous UK income maintenance system should mitigate any effects of health changes on income and wealth there compared with what is available in the United States.

[snip]

US residents are much less healthy than their English counterparts and these differences exist at all points of the SES distribution ... The US population in late middle age is less healthy than the equivalent British population for diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, myocardial infarction, stroke, lung disease, and cancer ... These differences are not solely driven by the bottom of the SES distribution. In many diseases, the top of the SES distribution is less healthy in the United States as well.

[snip]

Oh but please don't stop there it gets better ...

With the sole exception of cancer, there exists a sharp negative gradient across both education and income groups in both countries ... As a result, country differences are larger and tend to be more statistically different at the bottom of the social hierarchy than at the top. Level differences between countries are sufficiently large that individuals in the top of the education and income strata in the United States have comparable rates of diabetes and heart disease as those in the bottom of the income and education strata in England."

There's lot more very useful ammunition for the discerning fireup where that came from ...

Source: [Disease and Disadvantage in the United States and in England](#) [PDF] published 2006 [The Journal of the American Medical Association](#).

The thing that leaps out from the pages of the study isn't just that the desperately underfunded and understaffed NHS outperforms the American health sector on most health outcomes although that is made eminently clear. No, what leaps from the pages is the way in which the American system betrays the overwhelming majority of the American population in the interests of making profits. The ever increasingly bizarre campaign to persuade Americans to keep their current rates of death, misery, and despair is being waged by a pack of parasites interested in one thing and one thing only. Money.

A health system that puts profit before patients as the current private enterprise system in the US does is not in fact a health system — it's economic sociopathy gone berserk.

markfromireland

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UStream of Jane's Panel: Tying the Progressive Movement to Congress for Policymaking

August 15, 2009 at 3:17 pm

[Stream videos at Ustream](#)

Outside Getting In: Tying the Progressive Movement to Congress for Policymaking

While the Netroots has gotten better at helping elect good candidates to office, there's still a lot of uncharted territory in making policy happen once the people we elect get there. This panel will discuss how the Netroots and progressive movement can have a greater impact on Congress. We'll also discuss current Congressional processes and some of the innovations being pursued by the Progressive Caucus.

PANELISTS: Joan McCarter, Darcy Burner, David Waldman, Jane Hamsher, Shaunna Thomas

[link to UStream](#)

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Liberal Bloggers Relieved Hamsher Won't Attack Howard Dean's Public Option

August 15, 2009 at 2:56 pm

So I'm on a terrific demo at the Apple Store in Pittsburgh, because when you're at Netroots Nation, you're expected to have a working wifi system, and mine wasn't, and I tap into the usual suspects and discover that my young friend Jane -- she who's whip must be obeyed -- has become the stuff of nightmares for even younger Matthew Yglesias.

Young and brilliant Matt is relieved to have the equally young Ezra Klein confirm that the public option now supported by Gov. Dean and that passes for the minimum insurance reform we can expect in the Age of Death Panels is more "progressive" than what Dean was advocating in 2004.

This apparently means two things in Matt's view: we're making progress in developing proposals we haven't passed yet and, more important, this progress is non-radical enough to earn [Ezra's seal of approval](#). Young Matt [describes Dean's original plan](#) and how it would play in Hamsherland today:

This was a pretty good health plan. But it wouldn't achieve truly universal coverage (he bragged, "It doesn't have to be this way in America. In Vermont, where I served as governor for the last 11 years, nearly 92% of adults now have coverage") and it didn't include a public plan. The up to age 25 thing is a good idea that I'd like to see incorporated into present-day discussions. But basically this plan amounted to something that today would count as a squishy moderate proposal that would get you denounced by Jane Hamsher as an insurance company sellout. And yet reading it in 2004, everyone recognized that for all its incrementalism the Dean plan was, in fact, a series of progressive measures that would constitute a huge advance over the status quo.

Gosh, what a relief! And I think it's swell that no one is suggesting that the reason Dr. Dean's prescription has changed to demand at least a strong public plan to force the insurers to be honest or lose market share is that he's come to realize how sick the current insurance system is and why it's going to need to be replaced, at whatever pace Americans feel comfortable with.

I just hope that when Jane co-hosts a health care reform event this evening with Dr. Dean, he does not feel too threatened by Ms. Hamsher.

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Marcy Wheeler on Torture Prosecutions: Liveblog At NN09

August 15, 2009 at 1:39 pm

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Spencer liveblogs Marcy via Gregg

Live in Pittsburgh: Our own Marcy Wheeler is on a panel about -- what else? -- torture prosecutions with Rep. Jerry Nadler, the ACLU's Melissa Goodman and Vince Warren and Jen Nessel from the Center for

Constitutional Rights. I'll be liveblogging; have at it in comments. Soundtrack is Crucifix's "Stop Torture," but for my purposes, it's the chorus to Jay-Z's "Where I'm From." Marcy, son!

CCR has actual baseball cards of Bush officials who ought to be prosecuted. Will be up on their website shortly. Nadler offers to trade three Ashcrofts for, I think, a Condi.

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Valerie Jarrett Speaks to FDL

August 15, 2009 at 1:08 pm

After Valerie Jarrett finished her NN interview with Baratunde, I was hoping there'd be a press availability in which I might have the chance to ask a follow-up or two about some of the topics that came up on the stage. Unfortunately (or so I thought), when I got to the media room, it was empty. Well, I was hungry anyway. So I walked back to the hotel to find some eats.

And there she was. Right up front (not hiding), seated with Michael Strautmanis, her chief of staff.

I felt a little bit sick doing it (the adrenaline always does that to me), but the die was cast. I report for you folks, and this was an opportunity. I told her I knew it was rude and I knew I wouldn't like it if someone was doing it to me, but I really have to ask if she wouldn't mind me interviewing her for FireDogLake. I did the Flip-Cam quickdraw, and we were off to the races.

She didn't know it at the time, but I sat through Baratunde's interview barely containing myself. There were just so many answers that, in my opinion, unfairly suggested that all of us should carry the load for the President – that he bears no responsibility for the choices he makes. In other words, if we don't make it politically untenable for him to do anything other than the right thing, we shouldn't blame him for doing the wrong thing. That, obviously, is bull-doozy.

Jarrett also went on to say that Obama does not believe punishment is a useful political tool. For me, that just doesn't pass the laugh test – he came out of Chicago for cryin' out loud.

So that's what I asked about.

Look... there are a hundred different topics I could have engaged on. I would have loved to ask questions about Obama's Bushian assertions of executive privilege and the state secrets doctrine. I'd have loved to ask about the financial crisis and the lack of prosecutions. Afghanistan? Don't even get me started.

But... She was already going out of her way to make time for me (and us), my imposition wasn't particularly graceful, and... well... Ultimately, I believe we've got decent people trying their best to do the right things in the White House. As much as I would have liked a free-ranging discussion of all the things many of us take issue with, they deserve time to eat their breakfast too.

Finally, when I left, Michael Strautmanis asked me to say "Hi" to Jane for him. That was unsolicited. Just

to make this perfectly clear, the significance of his request is that it demonstrates that Jane's work is noticed in high places. She's obviously doing something right.

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Iowa Dept of Elder Affairs Supports Pulling the Plug on Grandma?

August 15, 2009 at 12:03 pm

Where to begin? [Maybe here](#):

"Until last week this was basically a nonpartisan issue," said John Rother, executive vice president for policy at AARP, the seniors lobbying group. "People across the political spectrum recognize that far too often people's wishes aren't respected at the end of life and there is a lot of unnecessary suffering."

What a difference a week makes. Or should that be "weak"? From [the Des Moines Register](#):

Sen. Charles Grassley made headlines this week when he criticized parts of a U.S. House bill that would pay for counseling for older Americans' final years, but in 2003, he supported legislation that included Medicare reimbursement for some end-of-life services.

Aides to the Iowa Republican noted several differences between the 2003 Medicare prescription drug bill's provisions for end-of-life counseling and those in the health care bill now before the House.

The 2003 Medicare bill provided reimbursement for services only to patients diagnosed as terminally ill.

Under H.R. 3200, a health care bill now pending in the House, all seniors would be eligible for occasional Medicare-reimbursed counseling services. The voluntary services could be provided by any physician.

Grassley [played to the GOP's nuttiest fringe](#), making their fevered nightmarish fears of government making end of life decisions for everyone into the official position of the GOP. [Grassley's not alone in this play](#), but from his perch on the Senate Finance Committee, he's got more leverage to derail things. Thus, he was able to pull the provision out of that committee's discussion, [because it might be misinterpreted](#) to mean "pulling the plug on grandma".

Gosh, wherever would someone get that idea, Senator?

But look at what he's doing here . . .

Don't you just love Grassley's idea of what to do if something is subject to possible misinterpretation? Some might take to the cameras to correct the bad information. Some might reach out to non-partisan experts in the field, to get them out front on this. But not Chuck Grassley. His approach is apparently, "If someone doesn't understand, let's let their misunderstanding stand, and shut down any effort to do anything."

(Wouldn't it have been nice if he'd had the same approach to the FISA amendments or the Authorization to use Military Force in Iraq? But I digress . . .)

The Iowa state government's Department of Elder Affairs isn't afraid of this, Senator. They've got a [great brochure on advance medical directives](#) [pdf] -- and no one has said that they are trying to pull the plug on grandma.

Or at least not yet. Once Grassley gets word of this, I'm sure he'll ride to the defense of Iowa's grandmas, from Keokuk to Sioux Falls.

Meanwhile, people who work with the dying, from pastors to nurses to doctors to [social workers like Thers' late mother](#), will continue to do the compassionate work that is so desperately needed. Too bad folks like Grassley are making life that much harder for all of us.

(photo from [Grassley's Senate website](#))

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Come Saturday Morning: Is This Really What You Want, Wingers?

August 15, 2009 at 10:30 am

In the comments thread of [this fine post by bmaz](#) on 21st-Century Hate in the USA, bobschacht worried out loud about the possible consequences of the fanning of the flames of right-wing and racist hatred:

...I think the Town Hall meetings imbroglio going on across the country now have ripped open a scab in the body politic: It may be that most of the country has moved on, and is willing to accept a Black President, and gay marriage, but there is a Resistant Core that is terrified because their world is getting turned upside down.

During the Bush years, the Republicans stoked the fires of fear about National Security, teaching us to fear each other and Watch Out for "terrorists," most of whom were expected to have brown skin and speak Middle Eastern languages.

Now that Bush is no longer in office, and we have a non-White President who campaigned on a

platform of change, Republicans are stoking the fires of fear because circumstances have forced President Obama to tackle ten problems at once, each one knee-capped by the Bush administration. But the cumulative effect is to raise the prospect of wholesale change, upsetting the Status Quo and threatening the Domestic Security of the people who identified with the previous ruling class.

[...]

It will be a miracle if President Obama makes it through his presidential term(s) alive.

Well, as I told him, this is what I tell wingnuts who I suspect of fantasizing about committing grievous bodily harm against President Obama, Democrats, or non-wingnuts in general:

Remember how we got the Great Society? Aka New Deal II?

That was when JFK got martyred in a city known to be a hotbed of right-wing racist extremism. The guy who took over for JFK turned out to be much more progressive than JFK ever was, much to the dismay of [the right-wing nutjobs](#) who'd put up all those "[WANTED for TREASON](#)" posters all over Dallas in the first weeks of November, 1963.

Remember how Bill Clinton got re-elected in 1996, two years after the Republicans — backed by a media that they or their arch-conservative financiers had increasingly bought up, bought off or scared off from honest reporting?

That happened when some of your buddies in a right-wing Michigan militia thought it would be a neat idea to murder 168 government employees and their children by blowing up the Murrah Building in Oklahoma City. [See also the picture in this post.]

Do you all really want to go for the trifecta here?

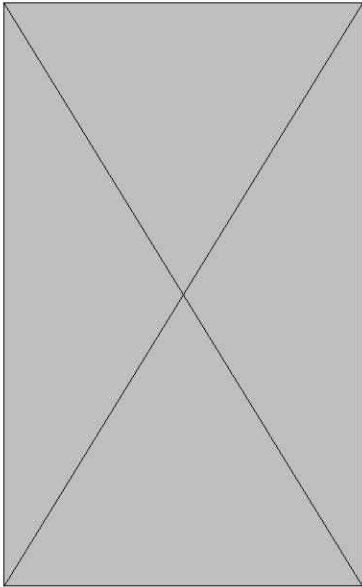
Heck, we could even go back to when the ultimate wingnut, John Wilkes Booth, ruined the chances of his beloved South's making a smooth adjustment to a post-slavery world when he put a bullet in the head of the man who advocated generosity, "with malice towards none and charity for all", towards the foe he had just vanquished. This is why [key leaders of the Confederacy, people such as Generals Robert E. Lee and Joseph Johnston, were horrified at the news of Booth's murder of Lincoln](#): Because they knew that the near-universal shock and revulsion generated by Booth's act had opened the door to the South's being treated as a captive province for the next few decades.

A word to the wise, wingers: Is this really what you want?

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Alaska Blogger Shannyn Moore Wins 2009 Steve Gilliard Journalism Grant at Netroots Nation

August 15, 2009 at 9:29 am



Who is Shannyn Moore?

She is Alaska's most courageous, outspoken and mercurial independent commentator. She can build a log cabin or remodel an upscale urban house. She can pilot a limit seiner through a storm in the Gulf of Alaska. She can field dress a moose or a bear.

She can also field dress a lipstick-encrusted pitbull.

Friday morning, at the [Netroots Nation](#) Conference in Pittsburgh, Shannyn Moore was awarded the 2009 Steve Gilliard Journalism Grant. Although the amount of the grant, \$500.00, isn't large, it is a great honor for Shannyn, and Alaska bloggers are very proud of her. I'm sure Steve Gilliard would be proud to have his name associated with this gutsy, truth-seeking fighter for liberal values.

As [Markos Moulitsas observed](#) about [Gilliard](#):

When reporters ask me when I first started thinking Daily Kos would become something more important, I tell them about the Dean campaign, or about the traffic explosion during the run-up and start of the Iraq War.

But that's pretty much bullshit. Because the reality is much more mundane, much less sexy -- It was the arrival on the site's comment boards of two people -- Meteor Blades and Steve Gilliard.

They were a real revelation to me -- I couldn't believe that people like them, so brilliant, so insightful, so talented, would spend time at my little corner of the world. They inspired me to keep writing, keep building this place. Because if nothing else, I needed to make sure they had a platform upon which to speak.

So they ended up being two of the first contributing editors on Daily Kos. Steve, in fact, was the first person I ever approached with the "guest blogger" offer. And he didn't waste time getting started, drawing on history of the region and the British occupation of Iraq in the late 1910s to set the stage

for what the US would soon face in Iraq. He was frighteningly prescient on Iraq, and it wasn't the only topic he would consistently nail. He was a credit to the progressive blogosphere.

Gilliard was mostly known for his blog posts at his own site, *The News Blog*, and at other blogs, like *DailyKos*. As *firedoglake* readers know, [he was highly respected](#) at the lake.

Shannyn Moore took to blogging in the early summer of 2008, after she had been fired from a progressive talk radio slot at Anchorage's *KUDO-AM* radio. Her firing was the second round of shakeups at the station, that had earlier ended the most progressive lineup of programs in Alaska history. That earlier lineup, that ran from late 2006 through mid-2008, had actually had a positive, perceivable impact on the 2008 Anchorage municipal election, through revelations about sleazy deals caught on an inadvertent iPhone conversation that ended up on the late Anchorage assemblyman [Allan Tesche's](#) answering machine.

At the first shakeup, *KUDO* program director [Aaron Selbig](#) was fired, replaced by not-very-progressive Carey Carrigan, a longtime second-string fixture in Anchorage media. For a while, Carrigan retained Moore. Her popular late morning slot was moved to early afternoon, and sometimes preempted by infomercials. Eventually, in early summer 2008, Carrigan fired Moore.

Soon afterward a few of Moore's friends, one of whom was me, convinced Shannyn to start a blog. Surprisingly, she didn't feel she was much of a writer. Within a couple months of the startup of [Just a Girl from Homer](#), the selection of then-Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin as Sen. John McCain's 2008 GOP running mate spurred Moore and other Alaskans to begin writing at *Huffington Post*. [Moore's posts there](#) caught on, to say the least ([10,137 comments to this one!](#)). Her combination of comprehensive knowledge of Alaska and national politics and witty one-liners earned her a following at *Huffington Post* that is quite remarkable.

During the fall 2008 presidential campaign, Moore became Alaska's voice on *Air America* radio, where she was interviewed again and again. Then, both Keith Olbermann and Rachel Maddow on *MSNBC* began using Shannyn as one of their commentators on Alaska issues and on Sarah Palin.

After the fall campaign, Palin continued to be an item of interest, as she began to insinuate herself into GOP national politics. Palin's new national profile and her seemingly pathological need to connect with her new-found national constituency, doomed Palin's previous actions with the Alaska legislature tending toward bipartisanship to the past. Shannyn Moore was able to communicate these changes to a national audience far better than any other Alaskan commentator, through her *Huffington Post* essays and continuing national media appearances.

In late spring, 2009, Moore was given a Saturday evening talk radio slot on *KBYR-AM*, which generally plays far-right radio, such as Sean Hannity, Glenn Beck and local hate radio personality, Eddie Burke. Her program has attracted [an unprecedented national audience](#) for its webcast.

When Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin announced her impending resignation on July 3rd, Moore, along with other Alaska bloggers, speculated that there were rampant rumors that Palin was under investigation by the Federal government. Unlike the rest of us, though, Moore was singled out by Palin's personal attorney, Thomas van Flein, with those who carried her remarks being threatened with a lawsuit. Moore, along with the rest of the Alaska bloggers, realized the threat was [pure, unadulterated bullshit](#), because

the last thing Sarah Palin wants is to be brought into an open-ended deposition involving a civil court case.

Moore held [a 5th of July press conference](#), denouncing Gov. Palin [as a "coward"](#):

On the Fourth of July, when Americans everywhere were celebrating our most sacred national holiday with parades and barbeques, Governor Sarah Palin was busy having me, Shannyn Moore, declared an Enemy of the State.

In a rambling quasi-legal letter, the most powerful person in this state accused me of defaming her for pointing out the fact that there have been rumors, -rumors- of corruption, rumors that have been around for years.

When Sarah Palin gave her three-weeks notice to the people of Alaska, aborting her term as Governor, a lot of people wondered why she quit. Mid-level managers turn-in their notice, not elected public officials. It didn't make sense. It still doesn't. People have been trying to guess why she really quit, and everyone in Alaska has been playing the guessing game. They're rumors. There are a lot of rumors. And with all the corruption we've had here in Alaska, of course we wonder what's really behind her resignation.

Governors don't just quit. But Governor Palin did.

The governor's massive overreaction -on the Fourth of July no less- should make any reasonable person wonder what's wrong with her. The Lady protests way too much. Eventually we'll all find out why she really walked off the job.

Sarah Palin is a coward and a bully. What kind of politician attacks an ordinary American on the Fourth of July for speaking her mind? What's wrong with her? The First Amendment was designed to protect people like me from the likes of people like her. Our American Revolution got rid of kings. And queens, too. Am I jacked-up? You betcha.

Sarah Palin, if you have a problem with me, then sue me. Shannyn Moore will not be muzzled!

The influential news aggregator and blog, *Buzzflash*, awarded Moore their [Wings of Justice Award](#) for her handling of the attack, and for her reporting and commentary.

Moore, more than any other progressive figure now active in Alaska, has become a national voice that helps the rest of the nation know that there are liberal visionaries here capable of articulating a powerful vision of what Alaska can be.

As Shannyn says, when closing her weekly radio program, "I'm just a girl from Homer, painting a red state blue, one stroke at a time.

Pull Up A Chair...

August 15, 2009 at 8:15 am

As a kid, I was fascinated by science fiction shows.

I loved the original Star Trek series a lot, especially City on the Edge of Forever, just superb writing in that one. (Even though Harlan Ellison still maintains his script got mangled.)

But my big love back then was Dr. Who. Especially the Tom Baker episodes.

The special effects back then were absolute crap. But I loved the show almost because of the salt shaker villains, not in spite of them.

And for the stories. In those shows, it wasn't just good versus evil -- there was always a twist for some shades of gray that I found fascinating. Still do.

I'm sure we all have "guilty pleasure" shows or books from childhood or beyond. Thought it might be kind of fun to talk about those a bit this morning. Let's talk about the things that inspire and entertain us.

Pour another cuppa and pull up a chair...

(YouTube -- A quick clip from a Tom Baker episode of Dr. Who, featuring K9.)

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Late Late Night FDL: Club Poodle

August 15, 2009 at 1:00 am

Early Show: [Antoine DuFour](#) and [Tommy Gauthier](#) "Tango Agricole"

Late Show: [Bobi Wine](#) "Caroline"

What's on your mind tonight?

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