

Bluegrass agnostics

A climate story of the late holocene

By Danny Mayer

“This is the only story of mine whose moral I know. I don’t think it’s a marvelous moral; I simply happen to know what it is: We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be.”
Kurt Vonnegut

July 8, 2012, the day the story broke, it was hotter than shit. 103 degrees in Lexington, 15 above the historical average, the last of an 11 day stretch of day-time highs exceeding the norm by over 10 degrees.

The news came in a series of staccato blasts appearing on the front of the Sunday *Lexington Herald Leader*, twitter-feed data blocks that covered the page like some rocks in a well-stacked, precariously tall, dry lay wall.

WEATHER GOING TO EXTREMES screamed the coping stone in super-size bold font. **Extreme has become the new normal** a blunt red splotch of text declared. “2012 is on pace to topple 1921 as the hottest calendar year on record in Lexington and Kentucky,” went the caption to a photo of parched grass lawn at the University of Kentucky Arboretum. “We might be dry right now,” declared some words above the image of a flooded street, “but last year was the wettest on record in Lexington.”

A sub-heading, “It’s not cold,” contained two bullets:

- 3 of Lexington’s 10-least snowy winters on record have occurred since 2000.
- No winter cold weather records have been set since February 1996.

My favorite, **Red, White and Boom keeps the beat despite heat**, is more flyrock than structure, technically not part of the **WEATHER GOING TO EXTREMES** story block, but telling nonetheless.

On July 8, the news was clear on one thing: bluegrass area weather had turned chaotic. Of the 491 words of text spread across the approximately eleven different data bits that detailed this crazy weather, “extreme” appears four times in three different information streams. “Extreme” cognates, words like *record*, *most*, *swings*, and *unruly*, appear in abundance, as do extreme-projecting “est” terms like *hottest*, *wettest*, *snowiest*. All told, the data streams rely upon at least 20 textual references to “extreme” in calling attention to the decade-long shift into wild, warmer-trending weather patterns as chaotic and extreme.

July, as it turns out, would be a watershed month in a watershed year for discussions about chaotic and extreme weather. The month would find climate journalist Bill McKibben informing readers of *Rolling Stone* that May 2012 was both “the warmest May on record for the northern hemisphere” and “the 327th consecutive month in which the temperature of the entire globe exceeded the 20th-century average, the odds of which occurring by simple chance were 3.7x10-99, a number considerably larger than the number of stars in the universe.” Record breaking forest fires, which had already burned through New Mexico in April and May, in June and July would threaten several Colorado mountain towns, the US Air Force Academy’s Colorado Springs among them, and in the process call attention to the growing



“Earth/Text/Wood/News, study 4,” a multi-media collage by Danny Mayer.

reality of a west on fire. In the midwest, July saw residents still mired in a months long pattern of crop-killing extreme heat and drought, while the northeast experienced widespread flooding. On the weather channel, anchors were beginning the slow, casual introduction of some new words into the American lexicon, derechos and superstorms, names given to weather patterns so large and powerful that they could cause immense damage across entire regions.

Amidst all the national chatter about abrupt and extreme meteorological occurrences, the real story breaking in the *Herald Leader* on July 8 had everything to do with what was not said, with what lay off-page and out of sight. In all those nearly 500 words of fear-inciting dispatches on “extreme” weather, the words global warming never made an appearance on July 8. Tucked into the bottom right of the page, appearing as a sort of foundation stone to the interlocked data, a text block headed “Why is this happening?” offered possibilities for, at the very least, *mentioning* the widely accepted theory that human actions have altered our long-term climate patterns. But no, on paper, the *Herald Leader’s* three credentialed experts were all in agreement: we don’t know why we’ve had such extreme, warm-trending weather.

The weather man said, “People can argue all day about why we are warming, but we certainly are warming.”

The University of Kentucky professor declared, “[N]obody really has the evidence to blame it on anything. Climate has continued to evolve as the Earth has evolved.”

The University of Louisville geography chair deflected, “[t]he issue is how much more vulnerable we’re becoming to these swings.”

On July 8 the news broke that my regional newspaper, still the primary source of everyday information for close to half the state—an important shaper of regional and statewide dialogue—has not a clue about global warming. On July 8, as I was about to find out, the news was beginning to break

Continued on page 4

Granddad was a pinhooker

By Ed McClanahan

My father’s mother, Stella Yelton McClanahan, lived to be 92, and I came to know her very well, and to love her very much; my father’s father, Claude McClanahan, died before I was two years old. Both the Yeltons and the McClanahans had been landowners and tobacco farmers in Bracken County, near the tiny community of Johnsville, for generations, and both families, I believe, eventually went into local commerce. “In 1884,” according to a local history, “Johnsville had a hotel, a tobacco warehouse, two wagon and blacksmith shops, a dry goods store, a general merchandise store, a doctor, a justice of the peace, and a constable.” My great grandfather Jonce Yelton and his business partner John Jackson (hence “Johnsville”) were proprietors of the general store and post office, and I have reason to suppose (see below) that the McClanahans had gone into the dry goods line, just down (or up, or across) the road from the two “Johns” General Merchandise & US Post Office.

I don’t know much about my grandfather Claude, but I do have an 1890s-vintage formal studio photograph of the Johnsville McClanahans, featuring Claude with his identical twin Clifford—two dashing young blades as alike as department store mannequins, in matching cutaway coats and waistcoats and high, starched collars, handsome fellows with duplicate dark, upturned mustachios and longish sideburns and black hair parted precisely in the middle.

Unhappily, I have no idea which of the two might be Grandfather Claude, nor of what ever became of Great Uncle Clifford—whichever one he is. To my knowledge, Clifford had no progeny, nor do I recall any shirt-tail cousins showing up from that branch of the slim

little sapling that represents all I know of my paternal family tree. I assume (metaphor alert) that the Uncle Clifford twig never bore fruit.

In the family photograph, Clifford and Claude (or vice versa) are standing behind three seated figures, a grim-looking elderly couple—my paternal great grandparents, presumably—and a pallid youth of 17 or 18—a nephew? cousin? red-headed step-child?—with a rabbitly, evanescent look about him, as though he too, like Uncle Clifford, were already vanishing from recorded history. (Which, apparently, he did, without a trace; to this day, we have no idea who he ... was.) The whole gloomy tableau is framed by the studio’s ponderous, funereal drapery. Nobody cracks a smile.

Now, well over a century later, I have it on good authority, handed down to me by some indescribable yet incontrovertible intra-familial telepathy system (we didn’t talk about certain things, we just knew them), that throughout their long married life, Claude insisted on selecting my grandmother Stella’s hats. My father was like that too; shopping for my mother’s clothes—or mine or, best of all, his own—was among his favorite diversions. (Much more on this in due time.) I’ve even got a touch of apparel-mania myself, as evidenced by the knee-length red velvet cape I affected in the 1960s. The point here being that we McClanahans are indisputably of the dry goods denomination, on the strength of which utterly flimsy evidence I submit that my predecessors were almost certainly the proprietors of Johnsville Dry Goods, across (or down, or up) the road from the Gen. Mdse. & USPO.

I know almost nothing at all of my family’s doings between the time of that photograph and 1908, when my father

Continued on page 5

Contents

2-Neighborhood

Final semester
Third street drums
Mayer’s Challenge
Bike Check

5-Region

Northside gentrification
Baby Luke!

5-World

Syria
Egypt

6-Opinion

DC Bus ride
Market bubbles
Letters

8- Comics

I’m not from here
Not political
Salubrious Soup

Coming soon

Henry County paddle
Return of Hedley IV
Final semester

Final semester

Notes on leaving the classroom behind

By Joseph Anthony

I have always—to a fault—followed Theodore Roethke’s advice in his poem “The Waking,” “to learn by going where I have to go.” So here I am still inching my way forward—35 years in—my last term of teaching, excited and anxious and still a bit lost. I remember a student pausing on his way out of class several years ago and saying: “You know. At first I was confused, but now I see your plan.”

I wanted to call him back from the hallway.
Tell me. What’s my plan?
What’s my plan?

Well, I always wanted to have fun. I wanted them to have fun—the kind of fun that comes with thinking hard. With discovering great poetry, great literature. Complex ideas. To keep my mind alive. Theirs, too. I was never much interested in teaching what I had to teach—the grammar, the outline, the details of research. I’ve done all that—I do all that—but it never really seemed where thinking came from. When students are very weak grammatically, when their sentences are fragmented chips that never add up to a mosaic, or when their paragraphs go on for pages with no discernible coherence like stroke victims or Joyce on acid, grammar is usually not their problem. They either are completely at sea with the topic or they have some kind of mental difficulty—sometimes even mental illness. In any case, teaching subject/verb agreement will not suffice.

What will suffice?
Today in class, I had three discussions on what constituted the self. I had them draw up particular components. The discussion came out of an article by Mai Kao Thao, “Sins of Silence,” where she states that silence had almost killed herself, and from two short stories we had read, “Girl” by Jamaica Kincaid and “Two Kinds” by Amy Tan. Two of the classes were raucous and fun. We circled the word dignity—pulled and tugged at it. How much autonomy do we need? When does autonomy turn into isolation? We started to examine reputation and how what others think of us enmeshes itself in what we think our self is. A couple students disagreed with each other. A couple disagreed with me. I thought how interesting.

It was fun.
The third class, however, was, more or less, sullen and reluctant. After prodding, students would reach into their

brains like one makes oneself answer a persistent child’s question, knowing there’ll be no peace until one does. A student would reach into his/her brain and take one idea out. Not a new one. An old one just lying around but good enough to try to jam it into this discussion—like I’m forever trying to jam my ill-fitting storm windows into my old Victorian’s frames. Make it fit and add duct tape.

OK, I said to one very young woman who looked annoyed at having her autonomy disturbed. Now consider that you might be mistaken and argue against yourself. What do you mean she asked? This is what I think. I know, I said. Now act like your opponent. What arguments might you use to counter your ideas?

She repeated what she had just said, but a bit more emphatically. Old guys like me have a hard time understanding things.
It was not fun.

This third class is very young. The whole idea of discussion is foreign to them. They’re used to being told and telling back. One young girl talking about the very harsh mother in “Girl” asks what makes the mother think she knows best? Her own mother, the girl said, is always telling her in an end-of-discussion voice, *because I told you*. This young girl looked at me with some of the same sullenness whenever I said something.

I’m not your mother, I wanted to say, but didn’t. Instead, I extravagantly praised a point she had made, rewording it into something articulate. She looked a bit awe-struck at her newly discovered depth and a tad less sullen.

This is the only class of the five I’m teaching that doesn’t really like me very much. The others are in our honeymoon phrase: I’m a star; I’m exciting. They are stimulated. I know from years past that this will not last but it’s good right now. But this class looks at me with

high school eyes. What is he going on about? Who wants to think about these things?

Who wants to think?
It’s fun to think, I want to tell them. But I don’t. I’ll have to figure out another way of getting them to see that. Nothing else besides thinking really is fun, I could add, but saying that would lose them forever. I would have confirmed their opinion of me: crazy old prof. Thirty five years ago, I was the cool young prof.

In my mind’s eye, I still am. I always had next term to get it right. Odd to think that this will be my last chance. I’ve always taken my waking slow, but this last term I may have to hurry up.

I’ll keep you posted on my progress.

Joe will be publishing a monthly update covering his final classes at Bluegrass Community and Technical College and general thoughts on teaching after a thirty five year career.

Friday night drumming, Third Street Coffee



Open-source drumming, hula hooping, dancing, juggling, and tree climbing at Third Street Coffee on Friday evenings. As reported to NoC by a young girl offering impromptu hula-hooping lessons to passersby, they will be playing in the parking lot “until it gets too cold to come out.” Photo by Aaron G. Floyd. See more at www.MisterFloyd.com.

Mayer’s Challenge at city hall and Al’s Bar

Public reveal of “MLKV” plans set for Tuesday, September 17

NoC News

This past April, NoC editor Danny Mayer issued an urban design challenge for Fayette Urban Countiers. The Mayer’s Challenge sought ideas and plans for affordably redeveloping a small part of city-owned urban space across Vine Street from the LexTran station. The design challenge was inspired by the city’s recent interest in redeveloping under-used parts of the urban fabric—particularly those urban surface parking lots that Rupp Opportunity Zone Master Planner Gary Bates once

described as unsightly and unnecessary.
After months of collating ideas, on Tuesday, September 17, Mayer will present at two different public gatherings his findings for “MLKV”—his name for the area under the MLK Viaduct. The first will be a brief presentation to City Council at their weekly 3:00 Tuesday Work Session. After that, a second public unveiling and presentation (you are all invited) will take place beginning at 7:00 pm at Al’s Bar.
“This is important,” Mayer said at a Sunday morning press conference. “The Scape design for the area calls for removal of the MLK viaduct. Our plans, meanwhile, attempt to work with it rather than remove it. It’s a difference worth considering. And 2-for-1 at Al’s.”
And don’t worry, Mayer says. There were plenty of great ideas.
“I was skeptical at first, but color me impressed. There’s just a lot of bright FUCers out there.”

Courier News

To encourage healthy and environmental modes of travel, for the fourth consecutive year the BCTC Sustainability Committee staffed a bike-check service at the internationally known Woodland Arts Fair, which was held this year on August 17 and 18. The service allows fair-goers to drop off their bikes in a secure area overseen by faculty and staff. Previous years have seen such notables as then-mayor Jim Newberry utilizing the service.
This year, the bike-check included several “snail” bike racks welded together by BCTC faculty member Shawn Gannon. And they were needed: over the course of the weekend, faculty and staff volunteers checked in over 170 bikes of all varieties—from 1940s-era three-speeds to modern bike-pulled children’s trailers. BCTC staff member Larry Porter, chief organizer for the bike-check, hopes to

expand upon the service next year by providing it for downtown Lexington’s Thursday Night Live series.

Reprinted from the Bluegrass Courier, the student newspaper at BCTC.



Sunday afternoon at the BCTC bike-check. Photo by Danny Mayer.



What plan does Mayer have for the MLKV? Find out September 17. Photo by Danny Mayer.

“We need to care less about surface aesthetics and more about core needs for an entire community.”

SEPTEMBER 2013

Some paragraphs on northside gentrification

In late August, WLEX reporter Dave Wessex delivered a four-minute report on the North Limestone area that stirred a wide-ranging discussion on the North Limestone Neighborhood Association Facebook page. Below is a slightly touched-up version of NoC editor Danny Mayer’s contribution to that talk.

- I. As a newer white resident with a college degree and job who bought a nice though somewhat shabby house four blocks north of Main Street on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, I am a gentrifier no matter what I do or say. My actions in the neighborhood must always take that identity into account.
- II. Police officer Pape noted two years ago in a meeting attended by several neighborhood leaders and also Council Member at-large Steve Kay that most northside crime has shifted north of Third and to pockets east of the Limestone corridor: places like Ohio, Pemberton, Seventh to the east of MLK. The patterns Pape stated generally describe a further ghettoization of crime from “the northside” into areas that have not yet been discovered by people like me and the new businesses I attend.
- III. I heard this information at a January meeting for the New Life Day Center on MLK (located between 2nd and 3rd), which occurred after my neighbor and CM at-large Steve Kay demanded one week of extra police surveillance of the Center to make what he described as “the neighbors” (a nearby business owner, my MLK Neighborhood Association, Sayre) feel secure. At the meeting, I also heard my MLK Neighborhood Association president, speaking on behalf of an organization represented in monthly meetings by 5-10 nearly all white home-owning households, state that extra surveillance of the homeless day center was important to make sure property values did not fall.
- IV. The New Life Day Center, unlike any other establishment that has been opened on the northside, is the recipient of a special “neighborhood watch” zone between Second and Third. My neighbors and I have been asked to report to Kay any crime we see committed. We are not able to report “good” things about the center—just panhandling, being made uneasy, etc. There are no metrics, for example, for free cups of coffee served, for positive street interaction like a smile or a “nice to see your daughter again this fine morning” spoken by a New Life visitor, despite my and other area neighbors’ requests that these be measured as well.
- V. Over the past three years, I have read numerous stories on northside “revitalization” that routinely describe the area in positive/negative terms: positive uplift today, but previously dangerous, downtrodden, and otherwise un-neighborly. These have all been celebrated by the vast majority of new area residents. Along with a vocally supportive city government, these publicly promoted cheers have helped spark private investment, both real and loaned money, during a national depression in which most home values have sunk. Most/all of these articles feature large pictures of new businesses, new business-owners, or recently renovated homes for sale.
- VI. Census data show that the East End, MLK, Jefferson Street, and Main Street tracts have all lost people. The much-celebrated downtown and northside revitalization has resulted in less people here, though it’s often represented as otherwise. (North Limestone has gained population, though its transition--business and people--has lagged those near-Main Street areas referenced above.)
- VII. Those who have left, according to the census, are overwhelmingly black.
- VIII. Nationally, black home ownership has plummeted since 2007, the start of our current depression. This has

- led, analysts argue even on mainstream places like MSNBC, to an inability on the part of black residents to purchase the (now cheaper) homes that have been on the market, meaning most of the benefits of low cost housing have gone to white homeowners and investors (me and people like me). Median black household wealth in the United States is now \$4,955, which compares to a national median of \$110,729 for whites.
- IX. This has real implications when one attempts to (1) purchase a house, or (2) come up with cash to renovate or upkeep a house. As examples from other neighborhoods around the U.S. show clearly, these trends will exacerbate as real estate values in the historically disinvested northside continue to rise. Current black homeowners who have not defaulted from the corrupt sub-prime loans that overwhelmingly targeted African American communities during last decade’s real estate bubble, will make bank. But the future don’t look bright for much of the area’s kids, who can expect to be priced out of the revitalization or ghettoized in off-corridor urban shotgun barracks.
- X. The new businesses cited in the recent WLEX newscast that has sparked our present discussions, and in other articles of the area that I have seen, are nearly all white-owned, with most employing an all-white or supra-majority white labor force, people mostly picked from the packs of newly-arrived residents (who are like me).
- XI. Many of these celebrated new businesses are bars that serve liquor; many/most employ and patronize people (like me) who do drugs and/or buy drugs from other people, some of whom live in the neighborhood. Yet, I often hear that we need to shut down liquor stores (like black owner Mr. Maxberry’s liquor store where North Lime Donuts now sits) and that we need to get rid of the druggies.
- XII. Black is a poor descriptor for “poverty.” There is a small black influx of college-educated and connected residents into the northside. The area also boasts strong middle and working class black homeowners who stayed in the neighborhood after raising children here when it was the Jim Crow social and business hub of black Lexington, people who opted not to move out in the 1970s and 80s to the west end’s black suburbs.
- XIII. Given Lexington is 85% white, the area is also not the supra-majority black tract that its reputation exudes. Though it is home to one of the larger populations of black residents, a large number of no-income, low-income, and working class white (and Hispanic) residents have also made homes here, making it one of the most integrated communities in Lexington. It is not, as the *Lexington Herald Leader* has suggested, only now becoming more integrated with the influx of people like me. Like all gentrifying areas, this is a low-income and working class area, more Cardinal Valley than Mentelle Park or Meadowthorpe—Cardinal Valley with hipsters and Alltech



- workers and newspaper editors and real estate speculators and artists and students and others who have all decided in the past decade to descend upon it.
- XIV. My neighbor across the street, Victor, jokingly calls my side of the block “the suburbs” because I don’t get police harassment for things like drinking a beer in the front yard of my property.
- XV. Nationally, critics have noted that the recent proliferation of creative urban hubs like ours has not been productive of many jobs, and that to the degree that they have, they have gone to newer residents. Our creative class narrative is the social narrative of transnational capital writ intimate: financially incentivized actions that rely upon high-cost outside inputs to solve local problems.
- XVI. The city’s farcical attempts at attracting a globe-trotting “creative class”—as a sound economic investment—is but one version of a scaled up gentrification. In both cases, the storylines and economic incentives go toward finding and attracting new (presumably better) talent: those from elsewhere, even dipshits from elsewhere. In both neighborhood and city solutions, what and who is at hand, those who are already our
- XVII. Here in Lexington, our Mayor is putting \$1.9 million in shrinking national funds designated for spurring low-income employment toward the construction of a downtown art-hotel that will be owned by a billionaire heiress of a liquor retailer. When asked how he justified the money, the Mayor claimed that there were “two tracks” to economic development. The top track, the one 21C will be built for, are imagined as out-of-town visitors (the kind who desire to stay at art hotels) and potential new residents (the kind who like art hotels).
- XVIII. The \$1.9 million in federal funds will require a certain number of low-income jobs to be created for the second track, which in the case of the art-hotel, will most likely mean porters, maids, etc., all engaged in the task of looking after people who can afford the projected \$199+ room rates. The Mayor calls these “good jobs—career jobs” but has given little or no information about the average pay such jobs can expect to demand.
- XIX. Nothing has been made of this discrepancy in economic opportunities by my northside neighbors. When I pointed this out defiantly on Facebook, I was shouted down by my fellow neighbors for being rude; when I devoted time writing a developed article on it, there was no response. It was just ignored, though my neighbors and local media did raise a fuss over a lawsuit against a new northside business brewery. In three weeks’ time, the brewery received four front page *Lexington Herald Leader* articles covering its plight, and it managed to self-generate nearly 20,000 energized signatories for a petition to stop the corporate bullying of its—yup, wealthy and white—business owners.
- XX. The selective quietness on economic and other discrepancies between the “two tracks” that Gray described has been pretty persistent. Much discussion or uproar of new businesses, art, good urban design, and local food—little or no discussion of the things that Ondine Quinn has recounted in a previous post: poverty, resource allocation, real estate inflation, and elderly and youth displacement.
- XXI. Much of the silence on such matters has been enforced. Speaking personally, I have been disallowed by my neighborhood association from circulating emails that have questioned the policy of selective surveillance of the New Life Day Center; I have heard no feedback—actually a direct statement of disinterest in involvement from one council member—on ideas for expanding our food access into lower income neighborhoods across the city. Emails to my Mayor and city council at-large member/neighbor do not ever seem to register. Downtown and the northside is always, to them, booming and worthy of the city funds and media stories they have been receiving in greater proportions.
- XXII. Downtown is slated for over a billion dollars in upgrades—a thin sliver of county land appearing on the map as a middle finger. Much of this will come from Tax Increment Finance (TIF) zones, which will divert county-wide tax growth into specific areas. This means, practically, that the northside, which is not part of the TIF zones, will soon be receiving less and less of its share of city tax monies that will be generated, so we are told, by our considerable investment in creating a thriving downtown (as, most likely, will your neighborhood miss out).
- XXIII. This will have unequal consequences on the two tracks of northside residents (as it will on different residents in your neighborhood).
- XXIV. I’m glad to see that people are starting to feel comfortable talking gentrification. More of this needs to happen, but we also need to be holding our public officials and area leaders—the same business people, neighborhood representatives, and cultural figures who always get quoted in the papers—more accountable for their words and their actions. We must also do the same.
- XXV. We need to care less about surface aesthetics and more about core needs for an entire community.



This house at 549 N. Limestone is selling for \$120,000. The 2 bed, 1 bath, 800 square foot home was bought by Broken Fork Designs in 2009 for \$35,000. It took 39 years, from 1970-2009, for the home’s value to triple; if it sells for \$15,000 less than the asking price, it will have taken 4 years for its value to triple again. Photo by Danny Mayer.

Baby Luke! Baby Luke! Baby Luke!

Luke Lajoie Connors Manke steps to the plate

NoC News
Saturday, August 31
UK Hospital

He came in like a dream. A little small-ball, some hit and run for eight hours until mom said enough, and then a mad push to the plate amid the screams and cheers of players and spectators alike—as fine a debut performance as any in recent memory.

Luke Lajoie Connors Manke, a 6 pound, 15 ounce, rookie out of Fayette County measuring 21 inches tall, registered his first official plate appearance last Saturday morning at 8:01 am.

Within hours of hearing about his arrival, young fans began to gather out in the hallway reserved for under-fourteen-year olds, there to cheer on their newest hometown favorite.



Nap Lajoie, Cleveland icon.

Agnostics, cont.

Continued from page 1

that the University of Kentucky, our Commonwealth’s flagship institution of higher learning, civic responsibility, and research production, is unable to discern whether humans are the primary cause of global warming, an inability that places it, both politically and intellectually, to the right of the Pentagon, a growing body of fundamentalist Christians, and Exxon CEO Rex Tillerson.

Feedback loops

To understand anthropogenic global warming is to open oneself to an avalanche of data. Climatologists record temperatures, droughts, floods, changing jet streams patterns, and then run them through sophisticated computer models. Oceanographers chart sea rise, ocean currents, fluctuating albedo rates. Glaciologists track shrinking ice sheets and increased releases of pre-historic methane into the atmosphere. Entomologists observe migrations of insect populations into new ecosystems; epidemiologists the creep of tropical diseases into formerly temperate climates. This doesn’t even take into account the reams of data covering the human geologies of climate change: our economic patterns of accumulation and waste, our landscape architectures of a carbon-burning culture, our social histories of extractive imperialism, our political deficits in leadership, and educational ones in knowledge.

To particularize and better draw out connections across vast sets of climate data, scientists often invoke the concept of feedback loops—climatic changes that amplify or reinforce other changes. A warming feedback loop for the American West might go something like this:

Sustained periods of increased temperatures in the American Southwest intensified water evaporation, which, coupled with a prolonged several-year drought, stress Rocky Mountain and Sierra Nevada tree cover, ecosystems that account for between twenty to forty percent of total U.S. carbon sequestration. Southern-dwelling mountain pine beetles, recognizing an opportunity when it presents itself, follow this warming weather and migrate into new northern territories, where their life cycle needs decimate stands of lodge-pole pines.

“Baby Luke! Baby Luke!” screamed the May Day Kid for a full 20 minutes, her arms thrusting skyward with each Luke.

“Nap—“
“—Laj,” sang Asher and Dee Dee, their hands joined together and circling counterclockwise around the Kid until getting dizzy and falling.

Unbeknownst to the freshfaced rookie with a small tuft of black hair, the young fans were repeating a name rich in history and meaning.

Luke, for the Indianapolis elementary school attended by Mom. Lajoie for Hall of Fame Cleveland Indians second baseman Nap Lajoie, a turn-of-the-century batting rival to Ty Cobb. Lajoie was so beloved by hometown fans that they temporarily renamed the team the Cleveland Naps during his decade playing there—the last time the team would be be known by anything other than the current dreaded Indians moniker.

Luke Laj has really taken to that part of the name, Dad, a Cleveland native, said. “Laj naps are already becoming legendary around here.”

Thus far, Luke Laj has been adjusting well to life in post-term ball. He currently leads the house in dirty diapers, and is second in napping percentage, and has steadily been bringing his bilirubin counts down. He also seems real teachable.

“He took to his mother’s warmth immediately,” observed Dad proudly, “just like Doctor Coach told him to.”



A family portrait: Dad, Luke Lajoie, Mom.

Increasingly, this same group of very rich people and businesses also own or underwrite many large national and global media outlets, whose news agencies—the main street media—employ shady right wing think tanks to control information and cast doubt on the legitimacy of global warming. Between the purchased political, judicial, and media Koch loops, these titans of industry, Lex Luthers all the story goes, have successfully kept red blooded do-good Americans in the dark about climate change. Here in the country that has pioneered and exported the carbon-burning lifestyle as a rite of democracy, only around 50% of Americans believe that humans are a primary cause of the Earth’s rise in temperature.

But this loop has a lot of “they’s” in it, and while I am sympathetic to it and acknowledge its power to alter world sentiment and contain attempts at change, foisting this country’s indifference and ignorance of global warming upon a small cabal of wealthy business owners (none of whom seem to live near us) seems a tall order to do all alone. This loop also reinforces the belief that conservative institutions serve as the primary promoters of uncertainty and/or malaise concerning the earth’s warming.

Here in Lexington, though, the dominant institutions for creating and circulating information are understood as liberal institutions: the university, the paper of record, and even (compared to the rest of the state) its liberal elected public representatives. We should consider other types of feedback loops. I’ll offer two.

Loop 1: UK is dumb

For at least the past decade, the University of Kentucky has spent considerable time and money branding itself as the state’s leading intellectual center, the commonwealth’s finest factory for the production of an educated global workforce capable of tackling the world’s great and small problems. The university’s most concrete educational pursuit of that goal, a rhetorical focus on the need to emphasize STEM (Science/Technology/Engineering/Math) learning, asserts the vital role the institution can play in helping lift up a Commonwealth population most often

described (even by UK’s former president) as uneducated and poor. For state residents, the assumption has always been that—whatever its administrative or faculty faults or rising costs of attendance—UK operates as a beacon of shining educational light, a trendsetter in the midst of a backwards state. It is this built-in institutional authority that makes UK faculty highly prized as credible sources of information for newspapers.

When the *Lexington Herald Leader* asked University of Kentucky meteorologist Tom Priddy to weigh in on the question no doubt on most readers minds after reading about chaotic Bluegrass weather, namely “Why is this happening?”, they did so knowing that the built-in reputation of a faculty member working at the state’s pre-eminent university is that s/he is a knowledgeable, inquisitive, and fair-minded scholar of their field.

In Priddy’s case, his front-page answer was surely brand-damaging for a state research university looking to tout itself as an emerging national leader in the STEM fields. At the very least, his words had to have delivered a shin shot to anyone valuing the scientific profession and its process of knowledge accumulation.

“[N]obody really has the evidence to blame it on anything,” the UK meteorologist stated. “Climate has continued to evolve as the Earth has evolved.”

First off, something I may not have made clear. Within the academic science world in which UK scientists circulate, the “debate” over global warming ended a decade ago. A theory that once naturally engendered a number of skeptics (as good scientists tested assumptions, wrote up results, and engaged in rigorous debate), is now nearly scientific orthodoxy, as unremarkable among scientists as the theory of plate tectonics. Since at least 1988, when NASA climatologist James Hansen testified before the U.S. Senate, scientists have only provided clearer and more detailed evidence that humans have been altering the earth’s climatology, mostly through our increased consumption of fossil fuels. As a quarter-century of data-gathering and

Continued on page 5

“[M]y favorite characters, real and imagined, are rogues of a certain stripe—charlatans, roughnecks, pranksters, grifters, show people—and I’m proud to add pinhooker to the bills of indictment.”

SEPTEMBER 2013

Pinhooker, cont.

Continued from page 1

was born on the little farm just outside Johnsville, and very little of them thereafter until I myself came along in 1932, but it seems safe to assume that things hadn’t gone all that well for the McClanacian. As far as I can determine, the dry goods store was long gone—I’m guessing it failed in the early 1900s, during the Black Patch troubles of those years, when the tobacco market tanked—, and of the five people in the photograph, by the 1920s only Claude was still sensible to the pinch, and he apparently hadn’t prospered. He was the father of three—my aunt Mabel, my uncle Don, and the youngest, Eddie, my dad—, and he was further burdened with “Unk,” Stella’s older brother (another Clifford, inconveniently, so let’s just stick with “Unk”), who had distinguished himself within the family by never really doing anything at all, and was a heavy feeder as well. The farm, which boasted (according to my late father’s boyhood memories) the requisite good milk cow, a few beef cattle, a couple of hogs, and a garden, could have sustained the whole outfit, even when it wasn’t producing much at all in the way of revenue ... but that wouldn’t have supported Claude’s tastes in stylish haberdashery, fine millinery for my grandma (a shy, retiring soul who would probably have worn a flowerpot on her head if her handsome husband had told her to), and, I daresay



1890s-vintage formal studio photograph of the Johnsville McClanahans, featuring Claude with his identical twin Clifford—two dashing young blades as alike as department store mannequins. Photo courtesy Ed McLanahan collection.

(knowing my father’s predilections, and my own), a daily infusion of good whiskey if he could get it. And how in the world did he finance a year at the University of Kentucky for each of his two sons? Well, see, he had himself a little something going on the side: he was what they called a “pinhooker”—that is to say, he was a small-time, short-term speculator in the price of leaf tobacco on its way to market, buying leaf in the street from cash-strapped growers and then immediately reselling it inside the sales warehouse. “These pinhookers”—sniffed a 1960 history of the tobacco

industry called Tobacco & Americans, by Robert K. Heimann, an industry flack cum executive—“were not above scouting the leaf country and frightening farmers into distress-selling with rumors of overproduction, disappearance of important buyers from local leaf centers, and the like.” Pinhooking was a nuisance to the buyers, a sometimes-necessary evil to the sellers—and a pretty shady proposition either way you slice it. It wasn’t criminal, exactly, but (people said) it was the next thing to it. So my family never bragged much about Grampa Claude the Pinhooker,

but I like to picture him stationed outside the warehouse door, a stylish anomaly among the milling throng of tobacco farmers, tradesmen, and teamsters, spiffy in his starched collar and upturned moustachios, a bouttonniere of sales contracts in his breast pocket, doing a little bidness on the side. Minus the moustache, he could be my dad. Claude’s career in pinhookery came a-cropper with the Great Depression, when everything else did likewise. His last known employment was in 1933, when my grandfather Poage, my mother’s father, hired him to paint an outbuilding on his farm in Brooksville, the county seat. Both grandfathers died in 1934. As anyone who has read my work knows to the point of distraction, my favorite characters, real and imagined, are rogues of a certain stripe—charlatans, roughnecks, pranksters, grifters, show people—and I’m proud to add pinhooker to the bills of indictment, and my grandfather Claude to the roster of perpetrators and usual suspects. My hope is that Claude, rest his soul, is enjoying and appreciating the society of Monk McHorning and Philander Cosmo Rexroat and Ken Kesey and Little Enis the World’s Greatest Left-Handed Upside-Down Guitar Player, and that they consider him an amiable and worthy addition to their ranks. Just mention my name, grampa, and tell ’em you’re with the band.

Agnostics, cont.

Continued from page 4

testing has refined the understanding of how warming works, deniers, skeptics, and agnostics have slowly melted away. One of global warming’s most recent high-profile converts, UC Berkeley physicist Richard Muller, even went so far last year as to cite a start date for human intervention into the climate: 1750, or about the time the English colonial empire began to burn coal on an industrial scale. Currently, scientific opposition to the theory of anthropogenic global warming represents a miniscule 2-3 percent of the scientific profession. Speaking as a UK scientist on the front page of the Sunday *Herald Leader* on the question of extreme, generally warming, weather, Priddy, like the other two experts the paper quoted, was certainly staking out a radical critical position when he opted against addressing the human role in chaotic weather events. But in Priddy’s case, the explanation was seemingly unique among disbelievers, almost comically so: the world’s first evolutionary meteorologist. Here’s my friend Matt (BA, University of Alabama) writing in an email to UK spokesperson Jay Blanton on Priddy’s apparent theory of evolutionary climates. “Professor Priddy thinks that the earth and the climate changes are caused by evolution—his words. Evolution, to my untrained mind, is the complex process of species differentiation through natural and sexual selection whereby valuable genetic traits are passed along. The earth changes due to plate tectonics and other geologic forces. The weather and climate are changed by variations in atmospheric composition, changes in heat input and distribution, etc. I am fascinated by his iconoclastic belief that the earth has evolved, and is apparently merely the most successful progeny as the result of millions of years of love-making between Mars and Venus, our mountain ranges exist because they most successfully fill an ecological niche, and the weather and climate are extremely successful species of clouds.” In other words, the characterization of evolving weather given by the UK specialist on the topic seems to posit that extreme area weather is not caused by global warming (or any other theory), but rather by clouds fucking. For a reading Lexington public, the assertion actually makes us more stupid and, on

the whole, worse-informed than had we read nothing. **Loop 2: The Lebowski syndrome** Priddy’s statement awoke in me what Matt Taibbi has elsewhere called the “the ‘Holy fucking shit!’ factor.” It would begin a string of emails sent first to UK President Eli Capiloutu and later to UK spokesperson Jay Blanton. As the issuer of my Doctorate in Philosophy, I am professionally tied to UK and, as such, have a continued interest in ensuring the institution maintain its currency as a place capable of both educating Commonwealth residents and equipping them with skills for being good actors in the world. In part, this is because my own value as a certified UK product is connected to the university’s continuing ability to display and utilize its intellectual faculties. My email asked if Priddy’s position was a UK position, namely that the climate and Earth have “continued to evolve” like monkeys. And if it was not a UK position, I wanted to know UK’s position on global warming. Does the institution or its president, I asked, believe in the existence of anthropogenic (human-caused) global warming?

Though uncomfortable, my questions were not farfetched. As UK has moved away from its primary task of educating undergraduates (this activity getting outsourced to graduate students and the community college system), it has branded itself as an institution whose rank and file perform the valuable civic work of tackling the globe’s intractable problems of today and tomorrow. Since one cannot tackle a problem, like health-care for example, if one does not believe in its existence, I wanted assurance in the face of Priddy’s public assertions that my alma mater was at least capable of granting anthropogenic global warming its ontology, its “this-ness,” its existence in the world. Surely, I thought then in the year 2012, at a time when meaningless scientific debate on the topic had moved on to considerations of whether the rapid environmental changes already coming our way constitute an entirely new geologic era, the anthropocene, I didn’t have to worry that my alma mater was still agnostic on the matter of humans and climate change. Across a string of emails (some publicly available on our Facebook page for July 2012) the UK position, Blanton

Thank you Third Street Coffee.

You are always a first stop on my visits from Newark, Deleware. I am told the coffee is excellent--but as a tea drinker that is second-hand information. So here’s some first-hand news: the tea is great! See you soon, Linda Mayer

*Paid for by a Community Sustained Journalism share.

made three connected arguments in refusing to offer up whether UK believes in the science of global warming. The first had to do with the need for the university to remain silent on all matters of educational and research: “[T]he University – as an administrative or governing matter– doesn’t typically make statements about scientific or policy issues – whether that’s global climate change, health care reform or the efficacy of genome sequencing. The reason, I think, is pretty rationale. We don’t make university-wide proclamations so as to ensure that we don’t inhibit academic debate.” The second placed Priddy’s statements in the context of his position as an academic debater: “He simply gave his opinion as a subject matter expert in a field relevant to the story at hand. I trust you are not suggesting that the university should take an official position or prohibit subject matter experts from expressing their opinion, regardless of whether it is a majority or minority point of view. Open inquiry and dialogue, as you know and value, are at the heart of the university and its promise – whether the topic is climate change or the economics of health-care reform.” The third was designed to advance university consensus on a policy of not speaking out. “I think most faculty would prefer that the university, writ large or as an administrative entity, not wade into scientific debates or the state of postmodernism as that could be perceived as a potential infringement on academic freedom. Moreover, with all due respect, I don’t believe that stance, in general, is outside the mainstream – by any means – of what other universities do as a general proposition...

[G]enerally, universities leave opining on issues of science, policy or the digital humanities to the subject matter experts.” I am, of course, familiar with these arguments. They are the currency of liberal academics, particularly those in the social sciences and humanities, where fears abound over infringements, real or perceived, on academic freedom. Indeed, after reading our email exchange, even my former dissertation director—a former president of the Association for the Study of the Environment and Literature—defended Priddy on these same grounds. Whether academic freedom is an ideal needing continuous defense in the modern university I cannot say, but its defense makes concessions. The first is to the very idea of critical research and open debate. In Blanton’s formulation, to disagree with a faculty member’s opinions—a term by definition referring to unfounded ideas—is akin to limiting academic freedom. In the case of Priddy, it allows Blanton to go all Lebowski. Does chaotic weather occur mainly because weather evolves? Well, hell, *that’s just his opinion, man*. In the conflation of intellectual disagreement with lost academic freedom, the idea that public disagreement and clear-eyed instruction are valuable tools of academic freedom and integrity seems to have been pinched. I’m sure even Lisbon U. had flat-earth theorists on faculty up through the mid sixteenth century, but it’s the university’s role as intellectual figurehead to discuss realities—particularly publicly relevant realities—in clear and correct ways. To do otherwise, to do as UK is doing, is to abdicate the institutionally imperative of being civic and intellectual leaders in the world.

This war, too, is a lie

By David Swanson

Some smart people thought, and perhaps some still think, that the 2003-2011 war on Iraq was unique in that it was promoted with the use of blatant lies. When I’d researched dozens of other wars and failed to find one that wasn’t based on a foundation of similar lies, I wrote a book about the most common war lie varieties. I called it *War Is A Lie*.

That book has sold more than any of my others, and I like to think it’s contributed some teeny bit to the remarkable and very welcome skepticism that is greeting the U.S. government’s current claims about Syria. The fact is that, were the White House telling the truth about the need for an attack on Syria, it would be a first in history. Every other case for war has always been dishonest.

The United States sought out war with Mexico, not the reverse. There was never any evidence that Spain sank the Maine. The Philippines didn’t benefit from U.S. occupation. The Lusitania was known to be carrying troops and arms. The Gulf of Tonkin incident never happened. Iraq didn’t take any babies out of incubators. The Taliban was willing to turn bin Laden over to be tried in a neutral court. Libya wasn’t about to kill everyone in Benghazi. Et cetera. Even wars that people like to imagine as justified, such as World War II, were nonetheless packaged in lies; FDR’s tales about the Greer and the Kearney and supposed secret Nazi maps and plans were a step on the steady trajectory from Woodrow Wilson to Karl Rove.

The idea that Syria used chemical weapons is more plausible than the idea that Iraq had vast stockpiles of chemical, biological, and (in some versions) nuclear weapons and was working with al Qaeda. But the evidence offered in the case of Syria is no stronger than that for Iraq. It’s harder to disprove merely because there’s nothing to it: no documentation, no sources, no science. Congress members who have seen the classified version say it’s no better than the declassified. Experts within the government and reporters in Syria who have seen more than that say they don’t believe the White House’s claims. The assertions masquerading as a case come packaged in dishonest claims about how quickly Syria gave access to inspectors, and are written in a manner to suggest far greater knowledge and certainty than they actually assert on careful examination.

War lies

The latest claims follow a series of failed claims over a period of months and stand to benefit a Syrian opposition that has been found repeatedly to be manufacturing false propaganda aimed at bringing the United States into the war. It seems, at this point, unlikely that the Assad government used chemical weapons two weeks ago, and already certain that even if it did, President Obama and Secretary Kerry don’t know it—they’ve only guessed it at best.

The debate over chemical weapons, itself, is framed by the lie that a law against chemical weapons can be enforced by one nation attacking another. In fact, Syria is not a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention. If it were, it would be subject to prosecution in court. In any event, it is subject to the judgment and action of the world and its courts, not of one vigilante representing 4% of the world. The bizarre idea that bombing a country can be a form of law enforcement dishonestly hides the fact that the action itself violates the U.N. Charter and the Kellogg Briand Pact.

Wars, a central lie maintains, are fought against evil. But Assad is not the devil incarnate. He’s a horrendously awful ruler, pushed in bad directions by those around him as much as they by him. He’s someone who has proposed disarmament in the past and been rejected by the United States. He’s someone who has done evil things in cooperation with the

United States, including lawless imprisonment and torture. He’s not going to eat American children in their sleep. He’s never threatened the United States, and has shown remarkable restraint in the face of threats by the United States and the CIA’s efforts to undermine and attack his government. Residents of the United States in search of dangers to get excited about shouldn’t arrive at Bashar al Assad until far, far down the list past poor diet, poor healthcare, lack of exercise, automobiles, obesity, industrial pollution, unsafe workplaces, gun accidents, chain saws, lightning strikes, and countless other causes of death.

Wars, a common lie holds, are fought in defense. But Syria is no threat to the United States, and when President Obama suggests that theoretically it could be, the laughter you hear from most listeners is the correct response. The White House hasn’t sought to build much of a case for “defensive war” against Syria, even on the Benghazi model, and that deficiency is a major weakness. Most people have no tolerance for non-defensive wars. Exceptions are sadists and believers in humanitarian bombings, or -- to name a category that encompasses both of those groups -- imperialists.

The Syrian government is, like any government the United States wants to attack, a brutal government that the United States worked with until recently, situated in a region full of brutal governments the United States still supports. In this case, the brutal governments still armed and supported by the U.S. government include Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, and Yemen. If the US. government wanted to reduce violence, it could end its 2001-begun war on Afghanistan, it could end its drone strikes, and it could stop supplying Saudi Arabia with cluster bombs and Egypt with tear gas and Bahrain with ex-police chiefs. Wars are not driven by generosity, despite what you’ll often -- and increasingly -- hear.

We’ve also been hearing that President Obama has no choice. He’s painted himself into a corner. War simply must happen now, for better or worse. This is nonsense, of course. If Kennedy could back off from a nuclear pissing match with Khrushchev, then surely Obama can accede to the opinion of the United States and the world on the matter of Syria. Had Kennedy prioritized stupid machismo, we wouldn’t admire him more. We wouldn’t do anything at all. We’d all be dead or never born. Wars, despite a common lie, are not inevitable.

Violence doesn’t reduce violence, despite the prevalence of this lie. Wars are not ended by enlarging them. Adding violence to the Syrian civil war will kill directly, escalate the killing by both sides, risk further escalation into a regional conflict, exacerbate a refugee crisis, damage existing aid operations, and make a cease-fire and negotiations more difficult. Killing some Syrians and blowing up some Syrian buildings will leave Assad with exactly whatever “impunity” he had before -- particularly if no nations pursue his indictment in any court for any crimes. But those Syrians killed and everyone else impacted indirectly will be worse off, not better.

War winners and losers

As war drags on and expands, the arguments for continuing it will be retaliation against the attacks of other nations, even if our nation provoked them, and the almost religious duty to “support the troops.” But the dirty little secret hidden by that shiny lie is that the troops don’t benefit from adding years to each quagmire. The troops, in fact, suffer -- often severely. Wars are not prolonged for the good of soldiers, no matter what your television says. They’re prolonged for politicians and profiteers.

The beneficiaries of a U.S. attack on Syria will be war profiteers, their political servants, media outlets that gain

Egypt: a minefield of moral hazard

By Marcus Flores

Egypt’s trial run with democracy ended in an abrupt transition from civilian to military rule, spawning an unusual number of critics of American foreign policy. Eugene Robinson of the Washington Post writes that in the spirit of democracy, Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi’s fate ought to have been decided at the ballot box rather than through a military coup. It’s a noble sentiment, but what if the Egyptians unwittingly elected a dictator?

Suppose such a leader appointed a terrorist to preside over the same city, Luxor, where his terrorist group smiled as it butchered 62 tourists; that such a leader’s party crafted the state constitution to read like a surah of the Koran; that, in regard to the September 11 attacks, he seriously said “When you come and tell me that plane hit the tower like a knife in butter, then you’re insulting us... something must have happened from the inside” ; that he forced the retirement of old generals because he preferred the more malleable younger officers. Suppose he then packed parliament with appointees from his own party and declared his executive orders supreme law of the land; that he aptly demonstrated his authoritarian instincts when he jailed bloggers and journalists for petty insults.

Honest question for Robinson: does that series of events not describe a protracted coup, albeit, by a legitimately elected leader?

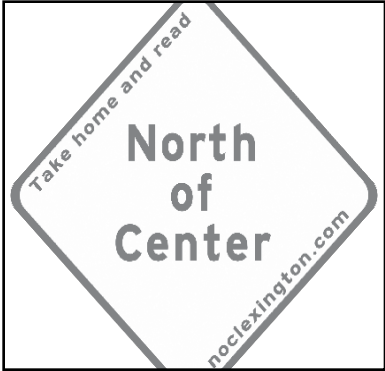
Morsi was that leader, and he was absolutely guilty of all of the above. He marginalized seculars, liberals, and other opposition elements—in effect subjecting the people to the yoke of a single party dictatorship piloted by the Muslim Brotherhood. This reckless course suggests that Morsi never bothered with studying the policies that kept Mubarak’s Egypt stable (though for a 9/11 truther, poor judgment is simply par for the course). Mubarak, ruthless despot that he was, at least acknowledged the legitimacy of the judiciary and kept a low public profile. He also maintained a stable relationship with Coptic Christians and kept a lid on extremist behavior. And in the end even he was not immune to the young Egyptians who took to Tahrir Square in 2011.

Imagine now the bewilderment of those same young Egyptians who observed the United States pivot to

support a megalomaniac goon like Morsi. If the bloggers and journalists—in other words, the educated class of people key to toppling Mubarak—can’t count on the United States in such elementary matters as supporting the good guy and punishing the bad guy, of what practical use is a relationship with the West? Yes, Mubarak was bad, and no, the Muslim Brotherhood was never officially allowed under him. He may have jailed a few members here or there but he sure as hell didn’t massacre them by the hundreds. Now if Brotherhood members, no doubt cognizant of US aid to the Egyptian military, can be gunned down with relative impunity, why should they suddenly want to take a more moderate approach to governance?

The political problems are just one of other potential perils, such as the loaded springs of religious groups. Were Egypt to again experiment with democracy, is there any guarantee that a number of extremists won’t force their way into parliament by, say, running as independents? Or what if one group went so far as to seek the destruction of another? (Notice how quickly Islamists turned their torches toward Coptic churches. Socio-cultural tensions evidently lie right beneath the surface.) Would those tensions have to be mediated by a nation that has, for the moment, lost all of its influence in the country it desires to help? Should Egyptians try democracy again under US guidance, how long would it be before a democratic government could be expected to reliably protect minority rights on its own? Answers to these questions are absolutely vital because in writing checks to the powers that be, America shoulders partial responsibility for the outcome—for better or, more likely, for worse.

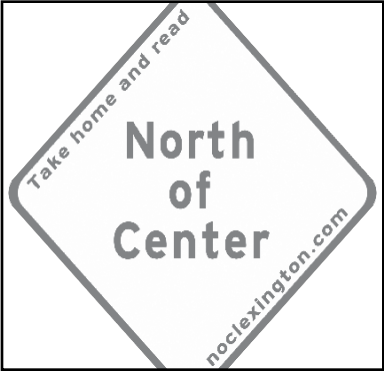
Already, years of aid have made the US complicit in the military’s bloody crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood; we once again have to contend with the Promethean threat of blow back down the road. President Obama’s decision to cut off foreign aid to Egypt was correct, although now, with our credibility blown to tatters, we ought to fully reevaluate whether it’s wise to support volatile Middle Eastern governments at all. Let us hope policy makers come to their senses as we inch toward intervention in Syria, because avoiding the Middle Eastern minefield altogether is better than having to tip toe out of it.



higher ratings, and a gang increasingly dominated by al Qaeda-affiliated groups that is seeking power in Syria through the use of vicious violence that is illegal in its entirety. War makers do not have noble motives.

A U.S. war on Syria, short or long, will not be fought by armies on a battlefield. It will be fought by missiles and planes and drones in and above the neighborhoods where men, women, and children live. The human, societal, and environmental damage will be something that too many parts of the world are familiar with but the United States itself is not.

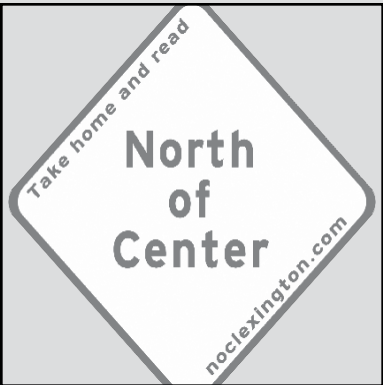
This war, like others of its sort, will not be won. Syria was not going to be the first case in which a war was based on honesty. It’s also not going to be the first place where a humanitarian war benefits humanity. It’s not going to be the first place where the U.S. military builds a stable democratic nation. It’s not going to be the first nation whose people are



grateful for such an intervention. And it’s not going to involve anything that could be properly called a victory.

The deepest lie at the route of this drive for war is perhaps the lie that a nation can prepare for war, dumping its energies and resources into every possible plan for every conceivable war, and yet manage to avoid those wars unless they are forced upon it as a “last resort.” This next dishonest, immoral, illegal, unpopular, murderous, atrocity-laden, uncontrollable, environment-destroying, rights-eroding, money-wasting war will come relentlessly, ineluctably, it will come . . . unless we compel our government to consider other possible courses of action, including that of actively working for peace through a posture of respect for others that would require a bit of truthfulness.

Article originally appeared on Let's Try Democracy, the home blog of David Swanson: davidswanson.org



Stocks, leverage, and city development

“Success is just a mess of overdues.”
John Hartford, “Howard Hughes Blues”

A post last week by financial journalist Mike Whitney on the *Smirking Chimp* blog detailed the return of corporate debt to the amped up levels of the pre-depression days (“Corporate and financial debt soar to pre-crisis levels,” September 7).

Drawing off a recent article appearing in the *Wall Street Journal*, Whitney traces the connections between the Federal Reserve’s loose monetary policies and the contours of the current stock market bubble—which, as he notes, is beginning to look a lot like it did just before 2007’s crash.

In creating borrowing rates that were effectively 0%, the fed has enticed an entire market into the stock market—not only big banks who get to borrow at zero interest from the government and then make bank off the free money in the stock markets, but also individual “savers” who have experienced five years of their savings accounts receiving next to no interest.

As with the last run-up in stocks, the numbers are based nearly completely on dumb market optimism, in this case that the Fed will continue giving money away for free that can expect to make its way into various grades of investments. And as with the last market bubble, market growth has been based on piles upon piles of debt: student debt, house debt, car debt, and, if you are a corporation, corporate debt (buying student and house and mortgage debt, along with the debt of other smaller corporations). Without people to pay off these debts—and despite unemployment rates going down, less people are working now than 6 years ago, and for less pay—the larger financial system structured around that debt has become in many cases more precarious than it was during the housing-led market bust.

Of course, a more simple way to measure the health of the economy is to track downtown Lexington development. Since the city lies outside the orbit of larger urban areas in the northeast, southeast, west, and midwest, it tends to come late to innovation. Ideas spread to here slowly; non-horse capital moves here even slower (and horse capital itself is a highly leveraged entity, making it too susceptible to market fluctuations). By the time an investor of the anonymous sort locates a Lexington builder like the Webb Companies, you can pretty much guess that that investor has already done pillaged all the more close and profitable city options.

The law of averages, particularly in the high-stakes financial game of macro-scale economic development, dictates that the first ones on the scene reap all the rewards. Projects built on leveraged money—another word for ponzi money—require downriver suckers to pay off the bets. Beyond that, costs increase and returns steadily diminish until, voila!, you’ve got a world class project for a sports arena, or yippee, or another Hyatt, or some steak or art/hotel chains.

As 2013 comes to a close, it looks like the suckers have got a hunch something’s up and are trying to mount a final push to sit at the public trough before things come crashing down again and they must return to square one. The Rupp project is, amazingly, grinding along. In the past month, both CentrePointe and 21c have been pushing to start projects (with different degrees of success). Maybe they see an opportunity for a final golden fleeing.

On the bus to DC

By Jerry Moody

As the bus to Washington DC pulled out of Lexington for the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Justice, my mind went to freedom riders of an earlier day. Sitting in this comfortable seat watching TV, the air conditioner cooling my brow, from time to time checking the internet for the latest news or weather reports, I thought of how much different this must have been for those first buses pulling north. Those were hot overcrowded school buses rolling down country roads from backwater Virginia or anywhere Alabama, from the Charlestons and Tupelos that lay spread throughout the Southeast. Each bump in the rode must have sent the riders bouncing into each other.

Two hours into the trip at a rest stop, I thought again how much different it must have been. No clean freshly mopped restrooms spaced evenly along a smooth ribbon of super highway. At best maybe a gas station, with explicit or understood WHITES ONLY signs resting above the restroom doors and leering white station owners affording the colorful bus-goers little privacy or dignity.

Pulling back onto the freeway as I closed my eyes to sleep, I drifted off wondering about the sleepless hours on that earlier long bus ride towards the promise of freedom. A child nestled in her mothers’ arms. A man struggling to stay awake, staring out the window as the night sky rolled by, the flat tires, the overheated motors, the long winding

twisty roads rocking the bus back and forth.

Even having seen DC a dozen times, glimpsing the Washington Monument always gives me a sense of awe. Pulling into DC and seeing it this time was no disappointment. The monument’s majesty still leaves me breathless. After disembarking and snapping some group pictures, we made our way past the brown stoned Smithsonian Castle, a building containing much of the history of our nation, and, with the sun heating up the morning air, toward the Lincoln Monument.

Only at this point did I get a true feel for the mass of people gathering. Making our way through the crowd, we found a place beside the reflecting pool. Across from us on the other side of it, a large patch of people dressed in bright yellow stood holding aloft a sign from the Unitarian Universalist Church: Standing on the Side of Love. From behind me, up the path came what seemed like thousands of blue shirted union members calling for jobs and justice. All around people of all ages, colors, and races stood clapping, cheering, laughing, crying, and singing. Not even



Author in front of MLK statue. Photo courtesy Moody collection.

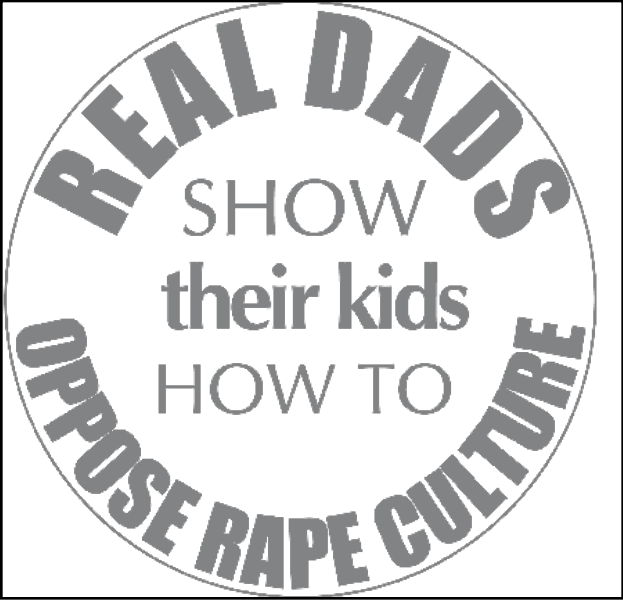
the sight of the Washington Monument could have brought more joy and pride to my heart than I felt right them.

As I rode the bus home to Lexington, one thought kept coming to my mind: How small was my sacrifice in making this trip, how muted my joy and pride, how weak my determination, in comparison to those who made this trip 50 years before?

Letters

Sticker hypocrisy

I find it interesting that *NoC* recently printed an article by Dave Cooper calling for additional restrictions on the type of sign-age a business can display on their own property (“No more feather flags!” June 2013), yet in your August issue you are advocating placing stickers “throughout town on lamp posts, telephone poles, magazine racks...” etc. that belong to someone else [Editor’s



introduction to Street Feminism sticker design contest winning entry “Real Dads show their kids how to oppose rape culture,” August 2013]. Defacing someone else’s property is blatantly illegal as well as highly unethical.

Howard Stovall, email

Editor responds,

We’ll grant you the magazine racks, but the lamp posts and the telephone poles *are ours, damnit!*

In solidarity,
Danny

Good Samaritan

More USchwitz inmate-inuring, tiny turlitzer terrism from Company NSA, et al (“NSA good Samaritan uses domestic eavesdropping for acts of kindness,” August 2013)!

Bruce, web

Hilarious. Keep up the good work Jeff, web

Seriously, where do these people get the idea that their “help” is wanted?
Blue Tigress, Smirking Chimp blog

Old man’s daughter speaks

Thanks for the wonderful story on my old man (“Old man gets older,” August 2013). He has been the source of much wisdom.

Linda Mayer, web

Parade hysteria

Danny what have you been smoking (“Parade County, USA,” August 2013)?
A. Nonny Mouse, web

Danny responds,

I ain’t smoking nothing; I’m just high on the Grand Master P!



The 2013 Roots and Heritage Parade could be key to transforming Fayette Urban County into Parade County, USA, or so so say some over-educated urban creatives. Photo by Danny Mayer.

North of Center is a periodical, a place (430 N MLK), and a perspective.

Editor & Publisher

Danny Mayer

Associate editor

Beth Connors-Manke

Contributors

Joseph Anthony

Michael Benton

Dylan Blount

Captain Commanokers

Dave Cooper

Christopher Epling

Marcus Flores

Andy Grimes

Horace Heller Headley, IV

Wesley Houpp

Cannon-Marie Green Milby

Kenn Minter

Don Pratt

Address correspondence, including advertising inquiries and letters to the editor, to noceditors@yahoo.com

or send print mail to NoC Editor,

430 N. MLK, Lexington, KY 40508

Unless otherwise noted, all material copy-

right © 2013 North of Center, LLC.

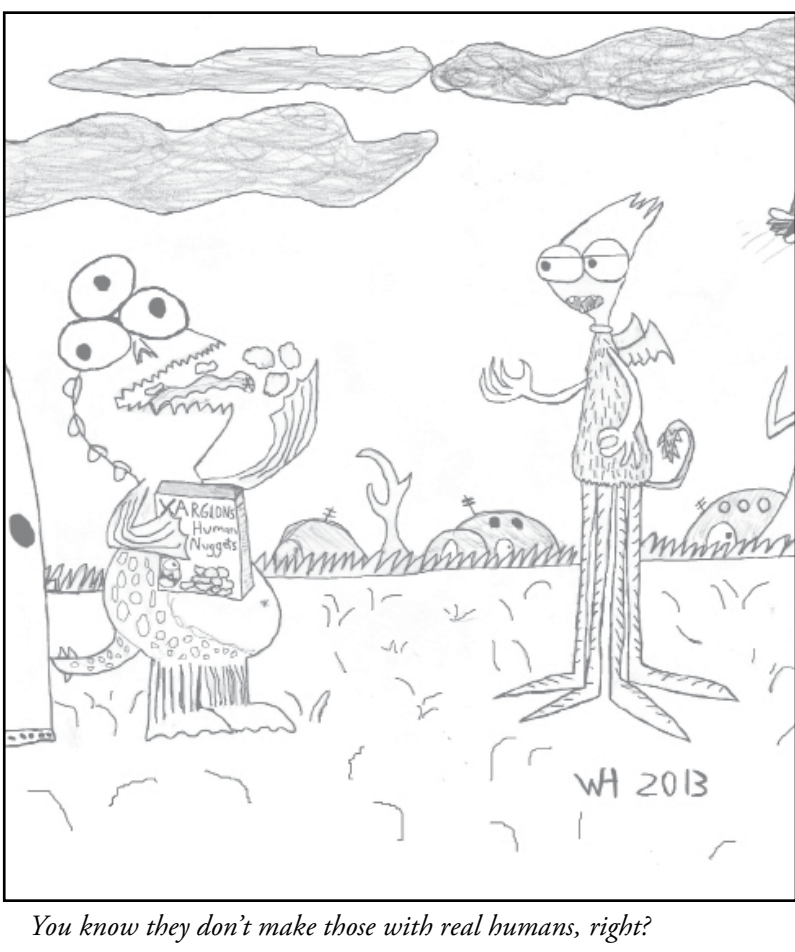
I'm not from here

Kenn Minter



Not political

Will Hensley



Salubrious Soup

Christopher Epling



CROCK returns

Thursdays,
5:00 at City Hall. Meet to discuss area issues before participating in City Council meetings.

Summer Dix

Hot showers make it perk,
a pale green current pushing
hard to the mouth
and into Louisa. Coming upon it
at night, I mark its terminus
by the lifting
of the cool musk that sweats down its course.

Community Supported Journalism Order Form

Individual Shares (good for 1 year)

- \$40: 3"x5" ad for whatever you want to promote.
- \$60+: Ad + invite to NoC potluck at Danny's abode.



Business/Non-Profit Shares (1 year)

- \$50: 3:x5" ad.
- \$75: Add + invite to NoC potluck at Danny's abode.

Submit payment online at nolexington.com, or mail order to:

North of Center, 430 N. Martin Luther King Blvd, Lexington, KY, 30508

For more info, write to the address above, or visite nolexington.com and search for Community Sustained Journalism.

Be Part of the Solution

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21ST 9AM-1PM • TRIANGLE PARK

International Peace Day

Amazon Rainforest Benefit

ONE LOVE LEXINGTON

Love

• Drum Circle with Tripp

• Community All Levels Yoga

• Beautiful Kirtan

REGISTRATION

www.OneLoveLexington.com

TRACK OUR PROGRESS

1 oil giant

30 billion gallons of toxic waste

900 open-air, unlined toxic waste pits

1,400 cancer deaths

30,000 indigenous Ecuadorian plaintiffs

30,000 threatened plant and animal species

100,000 square miles of tropical rainforest

18 year trial

\$18 billion guilty verdict

Join Off the Mat, Into the World in 2013

as we journey deep into the heart of the Amazon.

SEVA AMAZON

OFF THE MAT INTO THE WORLD

atthemattintotheworld.org