

September 2, 2012

**Clive Crook** in his Atlantic Monthly blog tells us what a young boy in England was thinking when Neil Armstrong walked on the moon.

*A personal recollection, if you'll indulge me. Reflecting on Neil Armstrong and the American mission to put a man on the moon, it occurs to me that this astonishing achievement probably altered the course of my life.*

*My father, who has been very ill lately, was born in the same year as Armstrong. He was an engineer in the British nuclear power industry, a job that involved a lot of international collaboration. As a result, I was raised on tales of his experience of working with American engineers on the finer problems of fuel rod manipulation and so forth. He used to say Americans worked harder, faster and to a higher standard than his British colleagues. They love their work, he used to tell me; not many Brits are like that. (I'd better not say what he thought of his colleagues in France and Italy.) My father is a skeptical man, not given to enthusiasm or exaggeration, so his admiration of the American engineers impressed me all the more.*

*When it came to what NASA accomplished, his admiration turned to awe. It makes me chuckle even now to think back to it. This reverence was so unlike him. He wanted me to understand just how difficult a thing it was--and how daring. "I know you think it's incredibly hard, but it's so much harder than that." He followed the engineering as closely as he could and explained a lot of it to me. He persuaded me so well that I secretly decided it couldn't actually be done. The margins for error were just too small. I was sure something would go wrong and they'd fail. Of course we stayed up all night and watched the video of the first walk on the surface. We were both moved to tears.*

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**Evelyn Gordon** is not surprised Hamas has a better developed moral sense than the UN.

*If I were UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, or any of the 120 countries that sent delegates to the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Iran this week, I'd be more than a little embarrassed to discover that Hamas, a terrorist organization that thinks nothing of slaughtering innocent men, women and children in buses, restaurants and hotels, actually has a more developed sense of morality than I do.*

*While Hamas was invited to attend the NAM summit by Iran, it ultimately declined. This decision followed a public threat by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas that if Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh went, he would stay home. But senior Hamas officials [say](#) the desire to prevent an open rift with Abbas was only a secondary consideration. Their number-one reason*

for staying home was that they didn't want to be seen as supporting Iran at a time when Iran is openly supporting Syrian President Bashar Assad's slaughter of his own people by supplying him with [arms](#) and even [troops](#). ...

**Jennifer Rubin** says Ryan is starting to live inside the Dems' head.

*The Democrats are losing it, literally. The Obama camp and its surrogates are losing the fight to control the narrative about Mitt Romney and Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) They are losing the effort to distract voters through the presence at the GOP convention of Obama campaign staffers such as Robert Gibbs and Ben LaBolt, who spend their time wandering about and whining to the media here in Tampa about the "negativity" of the other side. They are losing the ability to con the media into focusing on likability, as if perceptions of Romney and Ryan wouldn't improve after this event.*

*That spilled over last night in a group outburst from Romney-Ryan critics over Paul Ryan's speech. Needless to say, the speech was a ringing success with delegates and in much of the mainstream media. Ryan bloodied President Obama with blow after blow, all the while appearing cheery and sincere. The crowd loved it. So nearly en masse the left decided that Ryan "lied."*

*For starters, that is the ultimate compliment. It is in effect saying the speech worked so well and was received so well that the only thing to say is that it was a con job. ...*

**Seth Mandel** at Contentions says Obama is like John Lindsay, another empty suit who did not care how much money he spent.

*Since we're now in the portion of the presidential election campaign in which the parties hold their respective national nominating conventions, the urge to find historical comparisons to analyze the candidates will be even stronger than usual. But there is one comparison when contemplating President Obama's re-election agenda that seems apt, but goes unmentioned: John Lindsay.*

*Lindsay, like Obama, was young, charismatic and telegenic when he ran for mayor of New York City in the mid-1960s. Like Obama, Lindsay ran as a moderate (he was actually a liberal Republican, but eventually switched parties to run for president as a Democrat), and like Obama Lindsay ran a campaign of hope and optimism at a time of dreary pessimism. But Lindsay also put in place some of the worst public policy New York saw in the 20th century, and the assumptions and outlook that led him to that legislation mirror those of the current occupant of the White House. If Barack Obama wins re-election, he will take office forty years after Lindsay left his, and the latter's administration offers us a good case study of the weaknesses of Obama's political instincts.*

*A great guide through the problems of the Lindsay years is Greg David's [new book](#) on the economics of postwar New York: *Modern New York: The Life and Economics of a City*. David was editor of *Crain's New York Business* for two decades, and the book's chapters are essential snapshots of each mayoral administration during those years. David's chapter on Lindsay is particularly relevant. ...*

**IBD Editors** call BS on the media's "fact checkers."

*If media "fact checkers" are just impartial guardians of the truth, how come they got their own facts wrong about Paul Ryan's speech, and did so in a way that helped President Obama's re-election effort?*

*Case in point was the rush of "fact check" stories claiming Ryan misled when he talked about a shuttered auto plant in his home state.*

*Washington Post fact-checker Glenn Kessler posted a piece — "Ryan misleads on GM plant closing in hometown" — saying Ryan "appeared to suggest" that Obama was responsible for the closure of a GM plant in Janesville, Wis.*

*"That's not true," Kessler said. "The plant was closed in December 2008, before Obama was sworn in."*

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**Jennifer Rubin** posts on the best and worst of Tampa.

*The best zinger of the convention. From Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis.): "College graduates should not have to live out their 20s in their childhood bedrooms, staring up at fading Obama posters and wondering when they can move out and get going with life."*

*The worst part of Tampa, other than the humidity. The enormous, oppressive security apparatus (and those silly khaki uniforms for the local sheriff's department, which cost \$500,000.) ...*

**Ed Morrissey** shows how the Clint Eastwood pick turned out well.

**Feel lucky, punk?** *When Republicans chose Tampa as the site for the 2012 national convention, they didn't do it for the weather, obviously. They saw Florida as a key to their hopes of winning the presidential election and hoped to make an impact on voters with their week-long argument for Republican control of the White House. According to a snap poll from [Survey USA](#) of 754 registered voters who watched the final night of the convention, they may have switched 10% of the vote with the effort:*

*1,211 adults were interviewed statewide 08/31/12, after Romney, Florida's Marco Rubio and Clint Eastwood spoke to the convention 08/30/12. Of the adults, 1,100 were registered to vote in Florida. Of the registered voters, 754 heard the convention speeches. Of the convention speech watchers:*

- \* 66% did not change their mind.*
- \* 16% switched from "undecided" to Romney.*
- \* 6% switched from Obama to Romney.*
- \* Adding those 2 together, that's 22% who switched TO Romney.*
- \* 10% switched from "undecided" to Obama.*
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[David Harsanyi](#) says Eastwood worked well for the GOP three ways.

*Honestly, I wasn't sure how Clint Eastwood's rambling [appearance](#) would play with voters, though I knew immediately how it would play with [most Beltway types](#). For me, it was, without doubt, the most entertaining convention speech in memory — hell, maybe the most entertaining of any political event period. But let's concede for the sake of argument that Eastwood's performance (empty chair and all) was all the terrible things that Democrats and many in the media have been saying it was ... So what?*

*1. It was fun. How many potential voters actually changed their minds — or made up their minds — on the basis of an ad-libbed comedy routine by a celebrity? If anything, chances are probably higher that that some mildly curious voters found the idea of an iconic actor giving a speech — one, incidentally, that didn't adhere to Republican orthodoxy — at the RNC as evidence that the GOP wasn't as rigid and unapproachable as everyone's been telling them. ...*

The tag team of Romney and Eastwood gets the nod from [Jennifer Rubin](#).

*The Romney team, following up on a strong convention, outfoxed the president by making a stop in Louisiana to view the Isaac storm damage and empathize with the victims. (No word if Mitt Romney folded everyone's laundry and brought dinner as well.) President Obama hadn't yet gone, so he was forced to cancel an Ohio event and scramble to get there himself. He was quite literally racing to catch up to Romney's lead. One could imagine that after a convention in which \$150 million of its negative ads were brushed aside, the Obama team has been thrown off guard.*

*Rattled and bitter that they could not knock the Romney-Ryan ticket off-message, the Obama team and its allies in the blogosphere fixated on Clint Eastwood. Listen, I was there and it was darn weird. But at times it was funny and devastating in its dismissal of the president's excuses. And in clips and sound bites the day after the live performance, the oddness is diminished and the punch lines seem more biting. In simple terms, the movie icon encapsulated the message of the convention: If someone is doing a bad job, you have to fire him. ...*

[Walter Jacobson](#) says the tweet reacting to Eastwood shows Obama's lack of confidence. The tweet shows the back of the Narcissist's chair in the Cabinet room. It is hard to believe, but Obama's chair has a brass plaque that says The President. And the back is slightly higher. How sick *is* this man? Better yet, the picture has been photoshopped. We have one with a clown's head visible and another with the back of Alfred E. Neuman's head.

*While I was very uncertain whether the Eastwood appearance worked, I now believe it did.*

*If it didn't, Obama would not have felt the need to respond.*

*It must have been a late night in AxelPlouffe HQ figuring out what to do, and whether Eastwood making a mockery of Obama's empty chair before tens of millions of people was something which could not be left to just the media to counter.*

*This is not the tweet of a confident man.*

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## Atlantic Blogs

### [Remembering Neil Armstrong](#)

by Clive Crook

A personal recollection, if you'll indulge me. Reflecting on Neil Armstrong and the American mission to put a man on the moon, it occurs to me that this astonishing achievement probably altered the course of my life.

My father, who has been very ill lately, was born in the same year as Armstrong. He was an engineer in the British nuclear power industry, a job that involved a lot of international collaboration. As a result, I was raised on tales of his experience of working with American engineers on the finer problems of fuel rod manipulation and so forth. He used to say Americans worked harder, faster and to a higher standard than his British colleagues. They love their work, he used to tell me; not many Brits are like that. (I'd better not say what he thought of his colleagues in France and Italy.) My father is a skeptical man, not given to enthusiasm or exaggeration, so his admiration of the American engineers impressed me all the more.

When it came to what NASA accomplished, his admiration turned to awe. It makes me chuckle even now to think back to it. This reverence was so unlike him. He wanted me to understand just how difficult a thing it was--and how daring. "I know you think it's incredibly hard, but it's so much harder than that." He followed the engineering as closely as he could and explained a lot of it to me. He persuaded me so well that I secretly decided it couldn't actually be done. The margins for error were just too small. I was sure something would go wrong and they'd fail. Of course we stayed up all night and watched the video of the first walk on the surface. We were both moved to tears.

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## Contentions

### [Even Hamas has More Moral Sense than the UN Secretary-General](#)

by Evelyn Gordon

If I were UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, or any of the 120 countries that sent delegates to the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Iran this week, I'd be more than a little embarrassed to discover that Hamas, a terrorist organization that thinks nothing of slaughtering innocent men, women and children in buses, restaurants and hotels, actually has a more developed sense of morality than I do.

While Hamas was invited to attend the NAM summit by Iran, it ultimately declined. This decision followed a public threat by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas that if Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh went, he would stay home. But senior Hamas officials [say](#) the desire to prevent an open rift with Abbas was only a secondary consideration. Their number-one reason for staying home was that they didn't want to be seen as supporting Iran at a time when Iran is openly supporting Syrian President Bashar Assad's slaughter of his own people by supplying him with [arms](#) and even [troops](#).

Clearly, no such qualms troubled Ban or any of the other high-profile delegates, most of whom are very senior officials of their own countries. By attending the summit, they sent the clearest possible message: Assad is free to continue slaughtering his people (the death toll has already [topped](#) 19,000, with no end in sight). And Iran is free to continue helping him do so without suffering any consequences whatsoever: It will still be treated as an honored and valued member of the international community.

So now we know that even Hamas has a red line: Murdering 19,000 fellow Sunni Muslims is beyond the pale. But for Ban and the other 120 delegates, there are no red lines: Mass murder is fine and dandy.

Actually, this shouldn't come as a surprise; both the UN and the Non-Aligned Movement have shown many times before that they have no moral red lines. But here's what *is* surprising: that so many Western countries—including all of Europe and, under Barack Obama, the U.S. as well—nevertheless continue to treat the UN as a source of moral authority, without whose imprimatur no international action is justified.

After all, these are countries that *do* think murdering 19,000 of your own citizens is beyond the pale. So why do they accord moral authority to the UN when both its secretary-general and its automatic voting majority (NAM comprises a majority of UN members, and frequently votes as a bloc) have shown so blatantly that they don't?

If you outsource moral authority to a tarnished agency, you can't help being tarnished yourself. And that's precisely where the West stands today: Having declared that no action on Syria is possible without UN approval, it is now viewed by many Syrians as no less indifferent to their plight than the UN itself.

But if even Hamas can renounce its [former paymaster](#) in Tehran on moral grounds, is it really too much to ask that the West muster the courage to do the same to the UN?

## Right Turn

### [Ryan freaks out Obamaland](#)

by Jennifer Rubin

The Democrats are losing it, literally. The Obama camp and its surrogates are losing the fight to control the narrative about Mitt Romney and Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) They are losing the effort to distract voters through the presence at the GOP convention of Obama campaign staffers such as Robert Gibbs and Ben LaBolt, who spend their time wandering about and whining to the media here in Tampa about the "negativity" of the other side. They are losing the ability to con

the media into focusing on likability, as if perceptions of Romney and Ryan wouldn't improve after this event.

That spilled over last night in a group outburst from Romney-Ryan critics over Paul Ryan's speech. Needless to say, the speech was a ringing success with delegates and in much of the mainstream media. Ryan bloodied President Obama with blow after blow, all the while appearing cheery and sincere. The crowd loved it. So nearly en masse the left decided that Ryan "lied."

For starters, that is the ultimate compliment. It is in effect saying the speech worked so well and was received so well that the only thing to say is that it was a con job.

But the "lies" turn out not to be lies at all. They are not even misrepresentations or exaggerations.

Take Ryan's criticism of Obama's ignoring Simpson-Bowles. This is a fact. That Ryan voted for it and then put together the only comprehensive budget using some elements of Simpson-Bowles (a premium-support Medicare plan, block-granting Medicaid) doesn't make his remarks about Obama a lie. A true statement — Obama ignored Simpson-Bowles — is not a lie because there is another true statement — Ryan voted no and came up with his own plan. This is a standard of "lying" that has never been applied to the president, by the way.

Then there is the "lie" that Obama took \$716 billion out of Medicare. That is also a fact. That Ryan, who has now *signed onto Romney's plan which puts the money back*, previously took those cuts to put back into the Medicare trust fund does not make the statement false. Obama can defend the cuts and say it wasn't so bad or say that sticking the money into Obamacare was justified, but Ryan did relate what Obama did.

Then there is the accusation that Ryan "lied" about the Janesville GM plant. Let's recall exactly what he said: "I believe that if our government is there to support you ... this plant will be here for another hundred years.' That's what [Obama] said in 2008. Well, as it turned out, that plant didn't last another year. It is locked up and empty to this day. And that's how it is in so many towns today, where the recovery that was promised is nowhere in sight." Ryan [quoted Obama accurately](#).

Ryan never said the plant was closed by Obama; he said Obama promised to revive the plant and couldn't deliver. That is a fact, not a "lie." Well, it's not a lie by Ryan; and I'll not call Obama's promise to keep the plant open a "lie." Obama just didn't deliver. The Romney-Ryan campaign points to a story in the [Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel](#) verifying that a decision was made in 2011, well after Obama's Janesville appearance, to keep the plant on standby. ("Since they were shut down in 2009, both the Janesville and Tennessee plants have been on standby status, meaning they were not producing vehicles, but they were not completely shut down.")

The stings on these issues cut so deeply that I suppose that the Obama team and its media allies are crazed to turn facts into lies and aspirations into distortions. Take Ryan's statement that he'll keep GDP below 20 percent. What Ryan critics say is "misleading" is in fact a policy difference. Ryan's budget does bring spending to about 20 percent of GDP, with an increase in defense spending. It's fine to say that's a bad choice; but it's not misleading.

It is likewise not misleading to say: “None of us have to settle for the best this administration offers — a dull, adventureless journey from one entitlement to the next, a government-planned life, a country where everything is free but us.” That is an accurate description of Obama’s own “Life of Julia” Web site, which depicted exactly that. If anyone blew it, it was the Obama team in putting out a caricature of the liberal welfare state.

I understand the frustration of Obama’s camp and its supporters. Moreover, I think much of the media accusations were offered in haste in an effort to get out the instant reaction without the media doing their full homework. It is a revealing moment, for the press and the Obama camp. For members of the Obama team, it means they are losing the race, and they know it.

## Contentions

### Obama and the Lessons of John Lindsay

by Seth Mandel

Since we’re now in the portion of the presidential election campaign in which the parties hold their respective national nominating conventions, the urge to find historical comparisons to analyze the candidates will be even stronger than usual. But there is one comparison when contemplating President Obama’s re-election agenda that seems apt, but goes unmentioned: John Lindsay.

Lindsay, like Obama, was young, charismatic and telegenic when he ran for mayor of New York City in the mid-1960s. Like Obama, Lindsay ran as a moderate (he was actually a liberal Republican, but eventually switched parties to run for president as a Democrat), and like Obama Lindsay ran a campaign of hope and optimism at a time of dreary pessimism. But Lindsay also put in place some of the worst public policy New York saw in the 20th century, and the assumptions and outlook that led him to that legislation mirror those of the current occupant of the White House. If Barack Obama wins re-election, he will take office forty years after Lindsay left his, and the latter’s administration offers us a good case study of the weaknesses of Obama’s political instincts.

A great guide through the problems of the Lindsay years is Greg David’s [new book](#) on the economics of postwar New York: *Modern New York: The Life and Economics of a City*. David was editor of *Crain’s New York Business* for two decades, and the book’s chapters are essential snapshots of each mayoral administration during those years. David’s chapter on Lindsay is particularly relevant.

As David notes, to Lindsay, “Business’s primary role was to provide the revenue for city government to right social imbalances.” So tax hikes were an important first step for Lindsay, and he agreed with the *New York Times*, which defended the tax plan: “in an assumption fraught with consequences,” David writes, “the *Times* said that the city’s businesses and residents could afford to pay more.”

Lindsay sold his pro-government tax plan by claiming that the money was for hospitals, schools, fire departments, and so on. But Lindsay used the money in large part to balloon the public payroll and city budget. The hiring spree seemed like a way to offer city residents more job security than in the private sector (and to keep unemployment numbers down, even if artificially)



until, thanks in part to Lindsay's own policies, it became clear the city couldn't afford those jobs. But no matter: Lindsay and his allies argued that government made it possible for the city's businesses to succeed, and it was time they gave back (sound familiar?).

The new tax structure brought the results with which we are by now quite familiar: "Within a few years, the business tax became a crushing burden on the manufacturing sector it was supposed to save," David writes. Indeed, the business income tax (instituted to replace a gross receipts tax), according to the Budget Bureau, cost businesses almost 45,000 jobs in its first five years. In its sixth year, the rate was raised again, costing close to 10,000 additional jobs.

All the while, Lindsay thought he was doing just fine, in part because flight from the city kept unemployment lower than it would have been had New Yorkers stayed put (much like Obama's unemployment numbers benefit from those who drop out of the work force). The country was experiencing a recession, and Lindsay simply blamed the recession he didn't cause, not his policies (sound familiar?). Yet by 1971 the country's recession had begun to give way to a national recovery—a recovery that, thanks to Lindsay's anti-business policies, eluded New York City. "He had exacerbated the worst recession in the city's history, assured the rise of an enormous public sector through his income tax, and established a system of rent regulation that would pit New Yorkers against each other," writes David.

The failed rent regulation policies were a perfect example of the folly of government price controls. Residents of wealthy neighborhoods whose rent control was grandfathered in paid meager prices for buildings that were getting increasingly expensive to maintain, leaving the landlords without the money to do so and the city without as much as \$500 million in lost property taxes.

It's a familiar story: the government puts in place policies that drive up prices. Consumers complain, and so the government enacts price controls intended to curb the problem, but ends up aggravating it by distorting the market and forcing producers to make up the lost revenue elsewhere. Have the technocrats learned this lesson? Hardly. The Obama administration enacted its health care reform bill that would cause premiums to rise. Once they figured this out and consumers howled, the Obama administration began [making plans](#) to add—you guessed it—price controls into the mix. As it happens, Obamacare is [already designed](#) to increase price controls.

Lindsay actually won re-election, but he was forced to base a good part of his campaign on his own likeability and the lackluster charisma of his opponent (again, sound familiar?). That was all fine for Lindsay, but not for the city he served. His second term saw job losses mount—factory job losses tripled what they were in Lindsay's first term.

The good news is that with more effective governing in subsequent administrations, the city eventually recovered from John Lindsay. It turns out that personal charisma and lofty rhetoric are no match for competent economic management.

## Investors Business Daily - Editorial

### The Media's 'Fact Check' Smokescreen

If media "fact checkers" are just impartial guardians of the truth, how come they got their own facts wrong about Paul Ryan's speech, and did so in a way that helped President Obama's re-election effort?

Case in point was the rush of "fact check" stories claiming Ryan misled when he talked about a shuttered auto plant in his home state.

Washington Post fact-checker Glenn Kessler posted a piece — "Ryan misleads on GM plant closing in hometown" — saying Ryan "appeared to suggest" that Obama was responsible for the closure of a GM plant in Janesville, Wis.

"That's not true," Kessler said. "The plant was closed in December 2008, before Obama was sworn in."

What's not true are Kessler's "facts." Ryan didn't suggest Obama was responsible for shuttering the plant. Instead, he correctly noted that Obama promised during the campaign that the troubled plant "will be here for another hundred years" if his policies were enacted.

Also, the plant didn't close in December 2008. It was still producing cars until April 2009.

An AP "fact check" also claimed that "the plant halted production in December 2008" even though the AP itself reported in April 2009 that the plant was only then "closing for good."

CNN's John King made the same claim about that plant closure. But when CNN looked more carefully at the evidence, it — to its credit — concluded that what Ryan said was "true."

Media fact-checkers also complained about Ryan's charge that Obama is cutting \$716 billion from Medicare to fund ObamaCare. Not true, they said. Medicare's growth is just being slowed.

But Obama achieves that slower growth by making real cuts in provider payments. And in any case, the media always and everywhere call a reduction in the rate of federal spending growth a "cut." So why suddenly charge Ryan with being misleading for using that same term?

In any case, Obama himself admitted that he's doing what Ryan says. In a November 2009 interview with ABC News, reporter Jake Tapper said to Obama that "one-third of the funding comes from cuts to Medicare," to which Obama's response was: "Right."

The rest of Ryan's alleged factual errors aren't errors at all; it's just that the media didn't like how he said it. But since when is it a fact-checker's job to decide how a politician should construct his arguments?

This isn't to say that journalists shouldn't check facts. Of course they should.

The problem is that the mainstream press is now abusing the "fact check" label, using it to more aggressively push a liberal agenda without feeling the need to provide any balance whatsoever.

And, as the reaction to the Ryan speech shows, they are now blatantly using it to provide air support for Obama.

Is it any wonder that soon after Ryan's speech ended, the Obama campaign rushed out an ad using the media's "fact check" stories as its source?

## Right Turn

### Tampa's best and worst

by Jennifer Rubin

The worst metaphor. [Rick Santorum](#): "I held its hand. I shook the hand of the American Dream. And it has a strong grip." Umm . . . what?!?

The best dressed. A tie between [Ann Romney](#) and [Condi Rice](#).

The worst moment in a speech. [Mike Huckabee](#) declaring: "[F]or years, [Joe Biden] gave less than two-tenths of one percent of his own money to charity. He just wants you to give the government more so he and the Democrats can feel better about themselves. Mitt Romney has given over 16 percent of his income to church and charity." It's just the sort of thing Mitt Romney would never say.

The best zinger of the convention. From Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis.): "College graduates should not have to live out their 20s in their childhood bedrooms, staring up at fading Obama posters and wondering when they can move out and get going with life."

The worst part of Tampa, other than the humidity. The enormous, oppressive [security apparatus](#) (and those silly khaki uniforms for the local sheriff's department, which [cost \\$500,000](#).)

The best-dressed delegation. [Texas](#), with a different matching outfit for each night.

The worst example of milking a line to death. From Wednesday night: "You did built it."

The best thing to come out of the cancellation of Monday's events. The universal recognition that these things are too long.

The worst TV moment of the convention. Could there be any doubt? [Chris Matthews](#).

The best effort in maintaining suspense. The "[mystery speaker](#)."

The worst part about the convention's end. By a mile: No more [CNN Grill](#).

## Hot Air

### New Florida poll shows vindication of Eastwood Strategy

by Ed Morrissey

*Feel lucky, punk?* When Republicans chose Tampa as the site for the 2012 national convention, they didn't do it for the weather, obviously. They saw Florida as a key to their hopes of winning the presidential election and hoped to make an impact on voters with their week-long argument for Republican control of the White House. According to a snap poll from [Survey USA](#) of 754 registered voters who watched the final night of the convention, they may have switched 10% of the vote with the effort:

1,211 adults were interviewed statewide 08/31/12, after Romney, Florida's Marco Rubio and Clint Eastwood spoke to the convention 08/30/12. Of the adults, 1,100 were registered to vote in Florida. Of the registered voters, 754 heard the convention speeches. Of the convention speech watchers:

- \* 66% did not change their mind.
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There is, however, a big caveat in this figures, which is that the people who watched the convention on the final night were still more Republican than the general population. The D/R/I of this sample was 24/48/27, and the D/R/I of the [2010 midterms](#) was 36/36/29. That's still significantly *less* Republican than I would have thought for a convention audience, and this might well be the first datum of success for the Clint Eastwood strategy. Another data point would be the saturation among registered voters in Florida for the final night; in this survey, nearly 69% of registered voters in Florida tuned in. That's a pretty remarkable reach, and if that's the case around the country, I'd say that Team Romney and the RNC won big.

Here's another data point, too: the split among Florida voters to Eastwood's speech was 49% positive to only 24% negative by the next day — presumably even after the avalanche of criticism for it. The overall split is positive in almost all demos except Democrats (30/45) and liberals (26/58). Majorities of independents (51/26), seniors (54/20), men (54/24) approved of it, but the biggest positive response came from Hispanics, 62/21 — even better than Republicans (58/12). Even women (44/25) and black voters (43/37) liked Eastwood's extemporaneous riff on President Obama.

The ultimate question, though, is whose minds were changed — and that looks bad for Obama almost along the same lines. The aggregate numbers are shown above, but here are some key breakdowns in the demos, which we'll calculate by adding those switching from either undecided or Obama to Romney, and those switching from undecided or Romney to Obama, in that order:

- Men: 32/16 (Romney/Obama switchers)

- Women: 15/9
- 18-34YOs: 29/15
- Black: 38/19
- Hispanic: 25/17
- Independent: 37/23

One last caveat: those tuning in among those demos would tend to be a little self-selecting as having an open enough mind to be convinced to switch. Still, it's pretty clear that at least in Florida, Eastwood not only got people to tune in, he got them to enjoy the evening and perhaps open their mind to support Mitt Romney. If I'm Mitt Romney, I'd say that this makes my day.

**Update:** I should probably also mention some of the reaction to the speeches of Romney and Rubio. Let's start with the positive/negative of Romney:

- Overall: 64/23
- Women: 62/26
- 18-34YOs: 51/39
- Black: 54/36
- Hispanic: 65/19
- Independent: 54/24

If Eastwood did indeed drive viewership, these numbers will be key in the weeks ahead for this swing state.

## Human Events

### [Three reasons Clint Eastwood worked for Republicans](#)

by David Harsanyi



Honestly, I wasn't sure how Clint Eastwood's rambling [appearance](#) would play with voters, though I knew immediately how it would play with [most Beltway types](#). For me, it was, without

doubt, the most entertaining convention speech in memory — hell, maybe the most entertaining of any political event period. But let's concede for the sake of argument that Eastwood's performance (empty chair and all) was all the terrible things that Democrats and many in the media have been saying it was ... So what?

1. It was fun. How many potential voters actually changed their minds — or made up their minds — on the basis of an ad-libbed comedy routine by a celebrity? If anything, chances are probably higher that some mildly curious voters found the idea of an iconic actor giving a speech — one, incidentally, that didn't adhere to Republican orthodoxy — at the RNC as evidence that the GOP wasn't as rigid and unapproachable as everyone's been telling them.

2. And speaking of mildly curious voters ... Though many of them may enjoy and admire someone like George Clooney, they probably don't relate to him. Clint, on the other hand, cuts through generations and fan bases. He's about as close to universally liked as a celebrity can get. This is why Chrysler [used](#) his voice to celebrate bailouts. Eastwood's appearance will do nothing to amuse those who take their politics too seriously, but he certainly lightened up what is by nature an artificial and highly-scripted event. No, Eastwood didn't lay out an eloquent, bullet-point argument against Barack Obama's economic policies; what he did was convey a prevalent sentiment in nonpartisan language that a lot of people who don't care much about politics understand.

Take this segment, which was probably the most effective:

You, we — we own this country. We — we own it. It is not you owning it, and not politicians owning it. Politicians are employees of ours. And — so — they are just going to come around and beg for votes every few years. It is the same old deal. But I just think it is important that you realize, that you're the best in the world. Whether you are a Democrat or Republican or whether you're libertarian or whatever, you are the best. And we should not ever forget that. And when somebody does not do the job, we got to let them go.

3. Ed Morrissey lays [this argument out well](#), but whatever potential damage Eastwood can do, and I doubt he did much, he can make it up with eyeballs. How many people tuned in to see Eastwood? Was his shtick worth the cost if those viewers stuck around to see strong speeches by [Marco Rubio](#) and [Mitt Romney](#)?

I'm sure Republicans had hoped for something more traditional from Clint, but really, what was the downside? I don't see one.

## Right Turn

### [Clint and Mitt team up](#)

by Jennifer Rubin

The Romney team, following up on a strong convention, outfoxed the president by making a stop in Louisiana [to view the Isaac storm damage](#) and empathize with the victims. (No word if Mitt Romney folded everyone's laundry and brought dinner as well.) President Obama hadn't yet gone, so he was forced to cancel an Ohio event and scramble to get there himself. He was quite literally racing to catch up to Romney's lead. One could imagine that after a convention in which \$150 million of its negative ads were brushed aside, the Obama team has been thrown off guard.

Rattled and bitter that they could not knock the Romney-Ryan ticket off-message, the Obama team and its allies in the blogosphere fixated on [Clint Eastwood](#). Listen, I was there and it was darn weird. But at times it was funny and devastating in its dismissal of the president's excuses. And in clips and sound bites the day after the live performance, the oddness is diminished and the punch lines seem more biting. In simple terms, the movie icon encapsulated the message of the convention: If someone is doing a bad job, you have to fire him.

Eastwood apparently so annoyed the egomaniacal president that the leader of the Free World felt compelled to hit back via Twitter ("[this seat is taken](#)") at the movie star. Talk about losing your presidential aura. Empty chair = Obama is now a powerful association. Will the chair be in ads?

In this, as in so many other artificial kerfuffles, the media's feigned outrage only serves Romney's purpose. Now everyone is familiar with Eastwood's cracks, and the conversation has taken the place of any criticism of the two nominees' speeches.

Thursday night was a critical point in the campaign and arguably the point at which Romney (with help from Eastwood) broke free of the media filter. Recall last week that the entire press corps was focused on Todd Akin. Then it became an obsessive plea for more details about Romney's policies, which, unlike the president, he has. Then there was the fixation on likability. That went down the drain when on Thursday night Romney appeared, if not likable, *admirable*. I now await the argument that personal qualities are irrelevant to the presidency.

The point at which Romney can define himself and thereby reassure voters has arrived. Now, with a money advantage, Romney can amplify his message and themes. The debates will be critical for Romney, but perhaps a little less so after a boffo convention.

## Legal Insurrection

### [This is not the tweet of a confident man](#)

by William A. Jacobson

Looks like Clint Eastwood got under Obama's skin.

Obama sent this tweet today in response to Eastwood mocking Obama last night by using an empty chair as a prop (via [The Rhetorican](#)):



**Barack Obama** ✓

@BarackObama

Follow



This seat's taken. [OFA.BO/c2gbfi](#),  
[pic.twitter.com/jgGZTbo2](#)

[Reply](#) [Retweet](#) [Favorite](#) [Pocket](#)



While I was very uncertain whether the Eastwood appearance worked, I now believe it did.

If it didn't, Obama would not have felt the need to respond.

It must have been a late night in AxelPlouffe HQ figuring out what to do, and whether Eastwood making a mockery of Obama's empty chair before tens of millions of people was something which could not be left to just the media to counter.

This is not the tweet of a confident man.



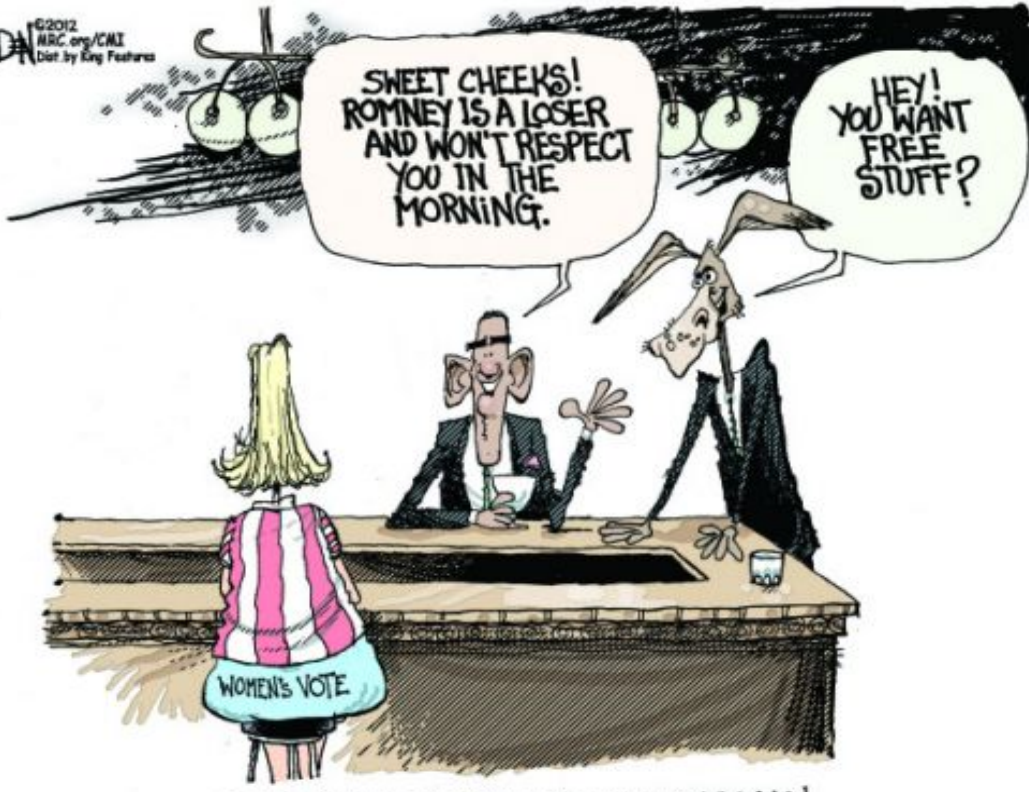




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CRUISING WITH OBAMA AND HIS WING MAN.