



# Akin Is Hardly Unique

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.  
Tribune Media Services

Rep. Todd Akin's fame — more accurately, his infamy — now reaches all the way to the Congo.

There, Eve Ensler, the award-winning American author of "The Vagina Monologues" and herself a survivor of rape, wrote an open letter castigating last week's suggestion by the Republican congressman that when a woman is a victim of "legitimate rape," her body has means of preventing pregnancy. As it happens, Ensler is in the Congo working to help some of the thousands of women raped in the fighting there. She called Akin's words "ignorant."

Nor is hers the only voice of international opprobrium. Criticism of the Missouri lawmaker has rung from such far points as London ("shamefully inaccurate"), Belfast ("profoundly offensive") and Paris ("medieval"). A writer in Australia dubbed Akin a "boofhead" — apparently, not a compliment. All this, plus domestic denunciation, including sharp criticisms from his own party.

Akin, make no mistake, richly earned every ounce of contempt that now rains upon his head. What he told KTVI-TV, the Fox affiliate in St. Louis, manages to combine repulsiveness ("Legitimate rape?" As opposed, one supposes, to the rapes where "she brought it on herself?") and remarkable ignorance (Does he really think the uterus is equipped with a force field?) into one appallingly malodorous ball of stupid. Naturally, given his grasp of biology, Akin sits on the House Science Committee.

Yes, you read right. You can't make this stuff up. Still, this is not about one congressman's need for sensitivity training and remedial science. Akin is hardly unique, after all. To the contrary, he is just the latest vivid example of conservatism's unrelenting hostility toward women's reproductive rights — as in a Texas judge who just upheld the state's ban on Planned Parenthood. Indeed, even as this controversy was simmering, the GOP unveiled a proposed platform plank calling for a constitutional amendment that would ban abortion with no exceptions for cases



Leonard PITTS

of rape or incest. It's a plank Akin himself could have written.

But he is emblematic of more than hardcore opposition to abortion. In him, one also senses the juvenile discomfort with which some male conservatives are afflicted at the merest suggestion of female sexuality.

Think then-Attorney General John Ashcroft, piously covering the breasts of the "Spirit of Justice" statue at the Department of Justice. Think then-Rep. Tom Coburn decrying the "full-frontal nudity" of a movie broadcast on network television — the movie being "Schindler's List," the nudes being doomed European Jews. Think Republicans banning Rep. Lisa Brown from speaking in the Michigan State House for using the word "vagina" — as opposed, perhaps, to "lady parts," "third base" or "tunnel of love." Think Rush Limbaugh calling Sandra Fluke a slut because she has, presumably, on occasion had sex.

It's the kind of behavior one associates with a locker room full of adolescent boys, waiting for their faces to clear up and their voices to change. But these are men. Worse, they are men who are judged competent to make, interpret or influence laws impacting the most intimate decisions a woman can make.

Including, for example, whether she must have a probe stuck up her "lady parts" before being allowed to terminate a pregnancy.

The temptation is to view Akin's gaffe in isolation. But there is a pattern here. In his antipathy to abortion and his childish grasp of reproductive science, Akin personifies much of the GOP, increasingly an extremist sect from which moderation has been banished.

He has said he just "misspoke," but that is disingenuous, as is, frankly, much of the criticism from within his party. Their problem and his is not that he misspoke.

It's that he spoke all too clearly.

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## YOUR LETTERS

### Preserving The Past

Jan Garrity, Yankton

Executive Director, Yankton College

The staff from Yankton College and 20 other South Dakota heritage institutions recently attended a free three-day Collection Care Workshop held at the Dakota Territorial Museum in Yankton as a result of the Dakota Collections Care Initiative (DCCI). DCCI is a partnership between collections care professionals at museums, libraries and archives in North and South Dakota to improve collections care and emergency preparedness and response for small to mid-sized historical collections across the two states.

During the workshop, professional conservator Terri Schindel, who is affiliated with the Museum Training Network, presented collection care information to the institutions on the care and handling of items, documentation, environmental monitoring, agents of deterioration, mutual networking, funding and resources and the conservation code of ethics. Demonstrations were presented on displaying or storing items and hands-on activities included drafting condition reports, cleaning, encapsulating and re-housing items and building supports.

On behalf of Yankton College, I want thank Crystal Mensch-Nelson, her staff and the volunteers at the Dakota Territorial Museum for hosting the event; the Association of South Dakota Museums for providing the luncheons; Siegfried Rempel, guest conservator from the Canadian Conservation Institution, and Schindel for their expertise; and to Dana Schaar, DCCI administrator, Chelle Somsen, Archivist at the South Dakota State Historical Society and Mark Ryan, director of Collections at Plains Art Museum and the members of the DCCI Advisory Committee for coordinating the event.

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## Online Opinion

The results of the most recent Internet poll on the *Press & Dakotan's* Web site are as follows:

### LATEST RESULTS:

**How closely do you plan on following the upcoming political conventions?**

Not at all .....	31%
Not much .....	26%
Very closely .....	23%
Occasionally .....	20%
<b>TOTAL VOTES CAST .....</b>	<b>372</b>

*The Press & Dakotan Internet poll is not a scientific survey and reflects the opinions only of those who choose to participate. The results should not be construed as an accurate representation or scientific measurement of public opinion.*

### CURRENT QUESTION:

**Have you already decided how you will vote in the presidential race?**

To vote in the *Press & Dakotan's* Internet poll, log on to our Web site at [www.yankton.net](http://www.yankton.net).

Small heritage institutions with limited budgets, like Yankton College, hold historical collections important to their state and their history, and are eager for information and assistance on how to best care for their objects and documents. The Dakota Collections Care Initiative ensures the opportunity that these historical treasures are preserved for future generations.

The workshops began in May in North Dakota at six regional locations and continue through September in South Dakota at six additional locations. For more information on attending, visit <http://dcciworkshops2012.eventbrite.com/>

# THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

THE DAKOTAS' OLDEST NEWSPAPER | FOUNDED 1861  
Yankton Media, Inc., 319 Walnut St., Yankton, SD 57078

## OPINION | OUR VIEW

# Neil Armstrong's Legacy And The Way Forward

Neil Armstrong left this world for the final time Saturday, departing in the most human of ways. He died at age 82 of complications from heart surgery.

But Armstrong had left this earth before, and as the commander of the Apollo 11 moon landing in 1969, he became the first human to stand on another world. He went, as the television show "Star Trek" so famously dreamed, where no man had gone before, and he will stand forever as one of mankind's greatest explorers.

It was a momentous accolade that Armstrong never wore comfortably. Perhaps the most renowned of our astronauts — more so, probably, than even John Glenn, the first American to orbit the earth — the intensely private Armstrong was also the least conspicuous of the lot, shunning publicity and eventually returning to the classroom to teach and, later, retiring to a farm. But he tapped his stature late in life when he became a critic of the Obama administration's decision to cancel a manned return trip to the moon. Armstrong's prestige made his criticism an embarrassment to the White House, as well it should have.

Armstrong's path to the ultimate mountaintop was filled with danger. He had been a test pilot, an occupation defined by mortal risks, before man had even ventured into space. He was part of the 1966 Gemini VIII space flight that conducted the first successful space docking, then had to execute an emergency splashdown in the Pacific when a thruster malfunction imperiled the craft. When he landed the lunar module Eagle on the surface of the moon on July 20, 1969, he did so with less than a minute of fuel left on the craft. He had one chance to do what had never been done before, and he hit it perfectly. "Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed," he radioed back to an astonished Earth, uttering what would be the second most famous line in the history of space exploration.

The most famous, of course, is also the most misquoted. As he stepped out onto the lunar surface — with 600 million humans, one-fifth of Earth's population, watching on television — he declared, "That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind." But the "a" before man was garbled in the transmission, and it was years before this small mystery was unraveled. No matter. Armstrong's words captured the moment, and his footstep, for all time.

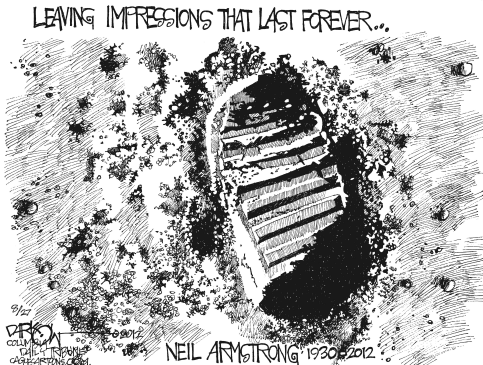
Armstrong is rightly hailed as a hero, but his heroism was also the sum of many other parts. It was fueled by the ancient spark of human curiosity. It wound up as the culmination of the genius of an army of scientists, the calculations of engineers and technicians, and the realization of the bold vision of President John Kennedy, whose challenge in 1961 to land a man on the moon before the decade was out set in motion an extraordinary quest. It still defines the American spirit.

Sadly, all that may seem out of place in an era when manned space flight faces an uncertain future. We no longer dream of such things. As such, some people may dismiss Armstrong as a relic from another age when we dared to do more than grandly dream.

But what he did will stand for all time. "When I think of Neil," Glenn remarked Saturday, "I think of someone who for our country was dedicated enough to dare greatly."

Maybe one day, we will dare greatly again. If or when that time comes, Neil Armstrong's legacy will point our way back to the stars.

kmh



## TODAY IN HISTORY

### By The Associated Press

Today is Tuesday, Aug. 28, the 241st day of 2012. There are 125 days left in the year.

**Today's Highlight in History:** On Aug. 28, 1862, the Second Battle of Bull Run (also known as Second Manassas) began in Prince William County, Va., during the Civil War (the result was a Confederate victory).

**On this date:** In 1609, English sea explorer Henry Hudson and his ship, the Half Moon, reached present-day Delaware Bay. In 1910, the Kingdom of Montenegro was proclaimed.

In 1922, the first-ever radio commercial aired on station WEAF in New York City (the 10-minute advertisement was for the Queensboro Realty Co., which had paid a fee of \$100).

In 1947, legendary bullfighter Manolete died after being gored during a fight in Linares, Spain; he was 30.

In 1955, Emmett Till, a black teen-ager from Chicago, was abducted from his uncle's home in Money, Miss., by two white men after he had supposedly whistled at a white woman; he was found brutally slain three days later.

In 1962, Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter resigned; President John F. Kennedy nominated Arthur Goldberg to succeed him.

In 1963, more than 200,000 people listened as the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.

In 1968, police and anti-war demonstrators clashed in the streets of Chicago as the Democratic National Convention nominated Hubert H. Humphrey for president.

In 1972, Mark Spitz of the United States won the first two of his seven gold medals at the Munich Olympics, finishing first in the 200-meter butterfly and anchoring the 400-meter freestyle relay. The Soviet women gymnasts won the team all-around.

In 1987, a fire damaged the Arcadia, Fla., home of Ricky, Robert and Randy Ray, three hemophilic brothers infected with AIDS whose court-ordered school attendance had sparked a local uproar. Academy Award-winning movie director John Huston died in Middletown, R.I., at age 81.

In 1988, 70 people were killed when three Italian stunt planes collided during an air show at the U.S. Air Base in Ramstein, West Germany.

In 1990, an F5 tornado struck the Chicago area, killing 29 people.

**Ten years ago:** Prosecutors indicted WorldCom's former chief financial officer, Scott Sullivan, and Buford Yates Jr., WorldCom's former director of general accounting. (Sullivan, accused of overseeing a

long-running conspiracy to hide operating expenses in order to boost WorldCom's earnings, later admitted guilt and was sentenced to five years in prison. Yates later pleaded guilty to securities fraud and conspiracy and agreed to help prosecutors; he was sentenced to one year and one day in prison.)

**Five years ago:** After reports surfaced of his June arrest at the Minneapolis airport, Senator Larry Craig, R-Idaho, told a news conference the only thing he'd done wrong was to plead guilty after a police complaint of lewd conduct in a men's room; Craig also declared, "I am not gay. I never have been gay." A military court at Fort Meade, Md., acquitted Army Lt. Col. Steven L. Jordan of failing to control U.S. soldiers who'd abused detainees at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, but found him guilty of disobeying an order not to discuss the investigation. (However, that conviction was later thrown out.) Oscar-winning actress Miyoshi Umeki died in Licking, Mo., at age 78.

**One year ago:** A suicide bomber blew himself up inside Baghdad's largest Sunni mosque, killing 29 people during prayers. California returned the Little League World Series title to the United States a 2-1 victory over Hamamatsu City, Japan. Katy Perry won three MTV Video Music Awards, including video of the year for the inspirational clip "Firework"; during the broadcast, Beyonce announced she was pregnant with her first child (Blue Ivy Carter was born in January 2012).

**Today's Birthdays:** Actor Sonny Shroyer is 77. Actor Ken Jenkins is 72. Former Defense Secretary William S. Cohen is 72. Actor David Soul is 69. MLB manager Lou Piniella is 69. Actress Barbara Bach is 66. Actress Debra Mooney is 65. Singer Wayne Osmond (The Osmonds) is 61. Actor Daniel Stern is 55. Olympic gold medal figure skater Scott Hamilton is 54. Actor John Allen Nelson is 53. Actress Emma Samms is 52. Actress Jennifer Coolidge is 51. Movie director David Fincher is 50. Actress Amanda Tapping is 47. Country singer Shania Twain is 47. Actor Billy Boyd is 44. Actor Jack Black is 43. Actor Jason Priestley is 43. Olympic gold medal swimmer Janet Evans is 41. Actor J. August Richards is 39. Rock singer-musician Max Collins (Eve 6) is 34. Actress Cary Pope is 32. Country singer Jake Owen is 31. Country singer LeAnn Rimes is 30. Actor Michael Galeota is 28. Actress Sarah Roemer is 28. Actor Armie Hammer is 26. Rock singer Florence Welch (Florence and the Machine) is 26. Actor Kyle Massey is 21.

**Thought for Today:** "Whom the gods would make bigots, they first deprive of humor." — The Rev. James M. Gillis, Roman Catholic author, editor and broadcaster (1876-1957).

## FROM THE BIBLE

*But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8.* Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

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## Published Daily

Monday-Saturday

Periodicals postage

paid at Yankton,

South Dakota, under

the act of March 3,

1979.

Weekly Dakotian

established June 6,

1861. Yankton Daily

Press and Dakotian

established April 26,

1875.

Postmaster: Send

address changes to

Yankton Daily Press

& Dakotan, 319 Wal-

nut, Yankton, SD

57078.

\* \* \*

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The Yankton Daily

Press & Dakotan is

a member of the Associated

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Daily Press Association

and the South

Dakota Newspaper

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the local news printed

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