



BY KATHLEEN PARKER

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WASHINGTON — Once again, Hillary Clinton has demonstrated herself to be the classiest person in the room. No wonder she's one of the most revered public figures in America.

But she is a politician, the context by which all things must be judged — at least on second pass. The first pass goes as follows: She manned up. She took responsibility for the attacks at the Benghazi compound. Good for the secretary of state.

Speaking from Peru on Monday, Clinton told CNN, "I take responsibility" for protecting diplomats. "What I want to avoid is some kind of political gotcha."

Which brings us to the second pass. There's nothing like a pre-emptive act of courage, otherwise known as falling on one's sword, to prevent a gotcha, particularly during a presidential campaign in which the challenger is trying to focus on security and/or intelligence failures that resulted in the deaths of Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans.

This rendition seems to be the most popular among Republicans — so far. Alternatives include that Clinton is making herself a target so that Republicans will attack her and attract sympathetic women back to the Obama fold. Riiaaigh.

In the month since the attacks, a timeline of which shows a variety of explanations and backfilling, the word Benghazi has become Barack Obama's WMD. What did he know and when did he know it?

Mitt Romney came out swinging on 9/11, the day of the attacks, literally before the dust had settled. Now, Sens. John McCain, Lindsey Graham and Kelly Ayotte have issued a press release lauding Clinton's gesture while pointing a finger at the White House.

The senators noted several red flags that should have signaled the rising threat level in Benghazi. Among them: a bomb attack on the U.S. mission in April, another detonation outside the mission in June, and an assassination attempt on the British ambassador.

"If the president was truly not aware of this rising threat level in Benghazi, then we have lost confidence in his national security team, whose responsibility it is to keep the president informed," the senators said.

They also questioned the White House's initial characterization of the attacks as a spontaneous protest around the now-famous (and ridiculous) anti-Islam video that set



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off demonstrations elsewhere, including at U.S. embassies in Egypt and Yemen.

In fact, there were no apparent demonstrations in Benghazi on the day of the attack. In her remarks from Peru, Clinton blamed the fog of war for the confusion and the difficulty of getting reliable information, a theme that has become the crux of the Obama administration's explanation. U.N. Ambassador Susan Rice has blamed poor intelligence for her own lack of awareness that greater security was needed in Benghazi.

That is one hot potato. Clinton sensibly has recommended stepping back from politics and allowing the FBI investigation to proceed. But this sentiment, appealing as it is, requires a third pass. Who benefits from stepping back? And when, exactly, did faulty intelligence on the ground excuse the commander in chief from responsibility? Not recently that I can recall.

It is a fact that the White House doesn't have daily responsibility for embassy security. Neither the president nor the vice president was aware that there had been requests for additional security at the Benghazi consulate.

So, who knew what and when? Who dropped the ball? Who said there was yellowcake when there was none? Is this a political moment that shouldn't be?

Former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, calling Obama's handling of the situation "a policy of provocative weakness," says Romney should exploit Benghazi for political gain. But this kind of bluster can backfire, as was the case when Romney criticized Obama before the facts were known.

Leadership requires temperance. The purpose of the investigation shouldn't be to affix blame but to strengthen weaknesses. Only our enemies benefit from our circular sniping.

Which brings us to pass No. 4: Stevens went to Benghazi knowing the risks and died in the service of his country, the people of Libya and the greater good. It is tragic, but it is war.

Our only conclusion at this point is that we don't know what happened. But it is also clear that no one in the Obama administration knew what was going on either. We will see. Until then, it is fair and reasonable to entertain the notion that Hillary Clinton simply did the right thing.

The nation benefits from her example.

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Robert Reich

Fear And The Party Of Non-Voters

BY ROBERT B. REICH
Tribune Media Services

However you read the polls, the 2012 presidential election is turning into a nail-biter. Former Gov. Mitt Romney and President Barack Obama are just about tied among likely voters.

The bump Romney got from the first debate seems to have been matched by the bump the president got from the good jobs report for September. (We won't know the real results of Tuesday night's matchup for another week.)

But beware. Polls of "likely voters" are notoriously imprecise because they reflect everyone who says they're likely to vote — including those who hope to but won't, as well as those who won't but don't want to admit it.

The biggest party in America is neither Democrats nor Republicans. It's the Party of Non-Voters. Its membership outnumbers registered Democrats and registered Republicans.

In a typical presidential election, a bare majority of Americans bother to vote. Since World War II, turnout has usually hovered between 50 percent and 60 percent.

In this respect, 2008 was unusual — summoning 63 percent of us to the polls.

The Party of Non-Voters is mostly lower-income. Its members are overwhelmingly poor whites, African-Americans, Hispanics and young people.

In 2008, many of them deserted the Party of Non-Voters and went to the polls. For example, a whopping 65 percent of eligible African-Americans voted. So did 49 percent of people between the ages of 18 and 24 — an age group that's normally far less likely to vote. Hispanics also went to the voting booths in unusually large numbers.

And most of them voted for Barack Obama. So the real question in 2012 is whose potential supporters are more motivated to vote, and whether President Obama can rely on anything close to the turnout he got in 2008.

In 2008, the biggest motivator was hope. But this time around there isn't much enthusiasm for either candidate. The Republican base has never particularly liked Romney, and many Democrats have been disappointed in Obama.

The biggest motivator this time around is fear of the other guy.

There's clear reason for members of the Party of Non-Voters to fear Romney and his running mate, Rep. Paul Ryan. Their reverse Robin Hood budgets would take from the poor and middle class and reward the rich. Their deter-

mination to turn Medicare into a voucher program and turn Medicaid over to cash-starved states would hurt some of the most vulnerable members of our society.

Hispanics are also worried about Romney's support for Arizona's draconian immigration law that allows police to stop people merely because they look Hispanic, and his enthusiasm for so-called "voluntary deportation" — making life so hard for undocumented workers that they're forced to leave.

Young people, who tend to be liberal on social issues, fear Romney and Ryan's opposition to abortion, and their rejection of equal marriage rights. As a result, they worry, too, about who Romney might pick for the Supreme Court.

But will these fears be enough to summon these people to the polls in large numbers? Romney is such a chameleon that in the debates he has seemed to disavow everything he's stood for, hide many of his former positions, and even sound somewhat moderate.

Meanwhile, for four years the GOP and its auxiliaries in Fox News and yell radio have told terrible lies about our president — charging he wasn't born in America, he's a "socialist," he doesn't share American values.

They've drummed up fears in a public battered by an economic crisis Republicans largely created, while hiding George W. Bush so we won't be reminded. And they've channeled those fears toward President Obama and even toward the central institutions of our democracy, casting his administration and our government as the enemy.

They've apparently convinced almost half of America of their lies — including many of those who would suffer most under Romney and Ryan. And those fears and lies will almost certainly get many Americans to the polls.

Republicans are well practiced in the politics of fear and the logistics the big lie.

The challenge for Obama and Vice President Joe Biden in the weeks ahead is to counter those fearsome lies with the truth. That truth isn't only what Romney and Ryan are likely to do to the nation if elected.

Obama and Biden must also reignite hopes about what they can do, if re-elected, to steadily improve the lives of most Americans.

Robert B. Reich, Chancellor's Professor of Public Policy at the University of California and former U.S. Secretary of Labor, is the author of "Beyond Outrage: What has gone wrong with our economy and our democracy, and how to fix it," a Knopf release now out in paperback.

about 814,000 people in South Dakota, and more than 230,000 of them volunteer during the year. It averages to about 37 hours a year for every resident. Much of this is because of groups like the United Way who spend countless hours helping the homeless, feeding the hungry, assisting seniors, and teaching the youth.

State and federal resources can only stretch so far. Government programs can only help to a certain extent. Bureaucrats will never be able to provide the kind of personable and compassionate assistance that volunteers and groups like the United Way provide.

Thank you to those who volunteer. You are what make this state great. Thanks to your dedication, South Dakota has stronger and better communities.

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OPINION | OUR VIEW

The Death Penalty And The Moral Fog

Deep down, it's hard for many of us to know what to think. The execution Monday night of convicted murderer Eric Robert brought a quick end to what is usually an interminable procession of appeals. Robert was convicted, along with another prisoner, of killing prison guard Ronald Johnson during an escape attempt from the South Dakota State Penitentiary just last year. Robert never sought to avoid the fate that our system of justice said he had coming to him, declaring he would kill again if he wasn't put to death. On Monday night, he met that fate — an eye for an eye, according to Exodus 21:24, not to mention state codified law.

But the morality of such matters is never so comfortably clear for some people. That was demonstrated in vigils of protest such as one conducted in Yankton Monday night while a lethal injection was swimming through Robert's veins in Sioux Falls. The main counter-argument the protesters put forth was simple: One of the Ten Commandments that our Christian society professes to revere declares: Thou shall not kill. And yet, the state carried out a killing to atone for a killing, as a judgment on another human being.

There is no question that Robert's crime was abhorrent. He deserved to be punished for his action; no one argued otherwise. And Robert's willingness to die was clear: In a letter he sent to Attorney General Marty Jackley earlier this month, but not made public until Tuesday, Robert wrote, "... my actions deserved the penalty of death." He added, "I do not want to or desire to die, instead I deserve to die. ... The victim's family deserves their justice swiftly to begin their healing." That's a powerful argument, albeit from a flawed source.

But opponents of the death penalty say it is not the place of a government to dictate life and death on such terms, and they viewed the state's execution of Robert as assisting with his suicide. Also, the death penalty removes any hope for atonement — not *forgiveness*, by any means, but an opportunity for a soul, if you will, to turn itself around and reclaim some measure of lost goodness.

This is an extraordinary dialogue of conscience that will probably never settle anything. There will be those people who will always believe that murderers deserve to die. And if you do believe that, Robert certainly got what he deserved. And there will always be people who will proclaim that the state must not, as they see it, commit the very same crime that we condemn others for doing.

It is a genuine dilemma for some people. Meanwhile, we must also recognize that there are other problems with capital punishment that lurk in the moral fog. The danger of executing an innocent person is always a possibility. Thanks to improved DNA techniques, at least 15 people in this country who were condemned to death for crimes have been exonerated since 1992. There have also been a handful of individuals who have been executed and were later believed to have been innocent. That is unforgivable — and uncorrectable.

Perhaps, then, what is important is that the dialogue of conscience continues with each case, as it seems to do in South Dakota, where executions are rare. The last thing we can afford to do is to take these matters for granted and allow the use of the death penalty to become an ordinary thing, as opposed to an extraordinary punishment.

The debate may indeed never be settled, at least in the U.S. — although 51 percent of the countries on the planet have settled it and abolished the practice, according to the United Nations. But perhaps the debate can serve a purpose, and it may one day change public opinion here on the subject.

Until then, we can only ask the questions — of our society and ourselves. Because all things considered, it's truly hard to know what to think.

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TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, Oct. 17, the 291st day of 2012. There are 75 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On Oct. 17, 1777, British forces under Gen. John Burgoyne surrendered to American troops in Saratoga, N.Y., in a turning point of the Revolutionary War.

On this date: In 1610, French King Louis XIII, age nine, was crowned at Reims, five months after the assassination of his father, Henry IV.

In 1711, Jupiter Hammon, the first black poet to have his work published in America, was born on Long Island, N.Y., into a lifetime of slavery.

In 1807, Britain declared it would continue to reclaim British-born sailors from American ships and ports regardless of whether they held U.S. citizenship.

In 1912, Pope John Paul I was born Albino Luciani at Forno di Canale, Italy.

In 1931, mobster Al Capone was convicted of income tax evasion. (Sentenced to 11 years in prison, Capone was released in 1933.)

In 1939, Albert Einstein arrived in the United States as a refugee from Nazi Germany.

In 1941, the U.S. destroyer Kearny was damaged by a German torpedo off the coast of Iceland; 11 people died.

In 1961, French police attacked Algerians protesting a curfew in Paris. (The resulting death toll varies widely, with some estimates of up to 200.)

In 1973, Arab oil-producing nations announced they would begin cutting back oil exports to Western nations and Japan; the result was a total embargo that lasted until March 1974.

In 1987, first lady Nancy Reagan underwent a modified radical mastectomy at Bethesda Naval Hospital in Maryland.

In 1989, an earthquake measuring 7.1 on the Richter scale struck northern California, killing 63 people and causing \$6 billion worth of damage.

In 1992, Japanese exchange student Yoshi Hattori was fatally shot by Rodney Peters in Baton Rouge, La., after Hattori and his American host mistakenly knocked on Pears' door while looking for a Halloween party. (Pears was acquitted of manslaughter, but in a civil trial was ordered to pay

more than \$650,000 to Hattori's family.)

Ten years ago: Ira Einhorn, the '70s hippie guru who'd fled to Europe after being charged with murder, was convicted in Philadelphia of killing his girlfriend, Holly Maddux, and stuffing her corpse in his closet a quarter-century earlier. (Einhorn was later sentenced to life without parole.)

Five years ago: President George W. Bush, raising Beijing's ire, presented the Dalai Lama with the Congressional Gold Medal and urged Chinese leaders to welcome the monk to Beijing. Comedian Joey Bishop, the last of Sinatra's Rat Pack, died in Newport Beach, Calif., at age 89. Singer Teresa Brewer died in New Rochelle, N.Y., at age 76.

One year ago: Rolling through small Southern towns in a campaign-style bus, President Barack Obama pressed lawmakers back in Washington to start taking up pieces of his rejected jobs bill and mocked the Republicans who had shot it down in toto. Financier Carl Lindner Jr., who used his experience running the family dairy store to build a business empire whose reach included baseball, banks and bananas, died at age 92.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Marsha Hunt is 95. Actress Julie Adams is 86. Newspaper columnist Jimmy Breslin is 82. Country singer Earl Thomas Conley is 71. Singer Jim Seals (Seals & Crofts) is 70. Singer Gary Puckett is 70. Actor Michael McKean is 65. Actress Margot Kidder is 64. Actor George Wendt is 64. Actor-singer Bill Hudson is 63. Astronaut Mae Jemison is 56. Country singer Alan Jackson is 54. Movie critic Richard Roeper is 53. Movie director Rob Marshall is 52. Actor Grant Shaud is 52. Animator Mike Judge is 50. Rock singer-musician Fred LeBlanc (Cowboy Mouth) is 49. Actor-comedian Norm Macdonald is 49. Singer Rene' Dif is 45. Reggae singer Ziggy Marley is 44. Golfer Ernie Els is 43. Singer Chris Kirkpatrick ('N Sync) is 41. Rapper Eminem is 40. Singer Wyclef Jean is 40. Actress Sharon Leal is 40. Actor Matthew Macfadyen is 38. Rock musician Sergio Andrade is 35. Actor Chris Lowell is 28. Actor Dee Jay Daniels is 24.

Thought for Today: "The thinking of a genius does not proceed logically. It leaps with great ellipses. It pulls knowledge from God knows where." — Dorothy Thompson, American journalist (1894-1961).

FROM THE BIBLE

Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt. Colossians 4:6.
Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

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Gov. Dennis Daugaard, Pierre
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We are also more giving than other states in our region like Montana, North Dakota, Iowa and Wisconsin, and more generous than much wealthier states, such as Connecticut and Massachusetts. For volunteering rate, we are the fifth best when compared to ALL the states. We have