



THE EMPTY CHAIR

# Obama's Global Failure

BY PETER HECK  
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"These are the times that try men's souls." So wrote Thomas Paine in the midst of the darkest days of the American Revolution, when the fate of what would become the grandest experiment in human liberty hung in the balance. In recent weeks, those words have found renewed relevance as it becomes clear to this generation that the fate of our nation hangs in the balance again.

This much is now clear: on every count, domestic and foreign, the presidency of Barack Obama has failed.

Though pride or egotism may prevent many from acknowledging it, there is simply no rational argument left to plausibly deny this unfortunate reality. Whether it is the crumbling value of the dollar, the demise of an economy once in recovery into one now slouching towards another recession, the crushing debt that is spinning us dangerously close to the point of no return, a persistent unemployment crisis that has not been remotely remedied by the continued spending or quantitative easing of all our brilliant government central planners, or the skyrocketing energy costs that break the collective banks of American family budgets both at the gas tank and with the monthly heating bill, President Obama has been a domestic policy disaster. One of the worst ever.

On the foreign front, a similar conclusion was perhaps more difficult to discern until last week. To any informed observer, there was certainly always reason for concern as the terror obsessed Muslim Brotherhood stretched its influence and consolidated its power throughout the Middle East under the protective cloak of the Obama-approved label "Arab Spring." Prudent minds questioned how such a development could possibly end well for those who desire peace, and why despite being reassured by their President that "[t]he day I'm inaugurated, Muslim hostility will ease," America's approval rating in the Muslim world continued to plummet to new lows.

Moreover, watching the Obama team perform on the world stage, one couldn't help but come to the uncomfortable conclusion that we appeared to be running three or four different foreign policies concurrently. The only unifying element to President Obama's handling of foreign affairs was his stubborn insistence on apologizing profusely for America's role in the world. Only in prostrating himself and his nation before others did Obama's foreign policy find clarity and purpose. The self-proclaimed "citizen of the world" viewed this as the penitent way his United



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States could exorcise its imperialistic demons and assume a co-equal role among the brotherhood of all nations.

But beginning last week, the final verdict on that Obama Doctrine was rendered. The president's appeasement of radical Islam has only made the aggressor more aggressive. His weakness has not made us safer; it has imperiled us. Its fruits can be found in every bomb-shattered embassy, every fist-pumping mob dragging murdered American diplomats through the streets, every black al-Qaeda flag raised in triumph over the ashen remains of the stars and stripes.

And while his administration pitifully tries to pin responsibility for the anti-American violence on an insignificant and trivial homemade movie, how ironic that the very President who once campaigned against the saber-rattling swagger of George Bush that supposedly incited Muslim animosity has most likely brought on this current terror because of his own braggadocio. Not

that radical Muslims have ever needed a good reason to attack the West, but if Barack Obama's strutting around like a peacock for 12 months boasting about how he ordered the raid to shoot Osama bin Laden in the skull doesn't provide it, I don't know what would.

Is Mitt Romney the answer? That remains to be seen. His recent statement on the terrorism now exploding onto and into American embassies worldwide was reason for pause. After correctly dissecting the roots of the problem back to a fundamental lack of American leadership, Romney vowed, "I intend to be a president that provides the leadership that America respects and keeps us admired throughout the world." That isn't quite right. We need a president to provide the leadership we admire because it is leadership that the world has no choice but to respect. And while reading his words in context provides reason to hope that is what Romney meant, we can be certain it is what Obama does not understand.

Historically speaking, it is almost always sound practice to allow for a healthy passage of time before drawing conclusions about the relative success or failure of a particular administration. But there was always a chance that a presidency would occur where the answer was painfully self-evident. In that sense, it appears Barack Obama was the one we'd been waiting for.

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## Writer's Block

# Voting Ritual Is Coming Home

BY LINDA WUEBBEN  
P&D Correspondent

Bob and I are one of the chosen ones. A couple months ago, our county clerk notified us because of a change in Nebraska law, voting precincts two and three in Cedar County were approved as all-mail election voting precincts. If a county had a population of less than 10,000 people based on the last U.S. Census, they can have voting precincts approved by the Secretary of State's office.

All future balloting in these precincts will be delivered to all registered voters 20 days prior to the election and the voter can vote at their leisure. The ballot is returned in a postage-paid return envelope and must arrive at the county clerk's office by the close of polls on election day.

So I have been seriously considering this new process. When I started voting several years ago, voters were cautioned to be sure your voting privilege of privacy was honored. We slipped into these teeny, tiny, tin-sided booths which had canvas curtains to ensure no one saw your voting choices. The booths even had an odor and you wondered where they had been stored and what living creature had been living in them since the last election.

Bob and I would pick up our ballots and march to opposite ends of the string of booths, making sure neither one of us copied the other's answers — reminded me of grade school. Everyone must remember covering your test papers so your classmate behind or beside you couldn't copy your answers. Your answers and test were sacred — even if you did have the wrong answer. The law was no one had the right to copy your stuff.

So now I wonder. Will Bob and I march to opposite ends of our house to complete our voting? We agree on most everything, unlike my mom, the die-hard Democrat, and my dad, Republican from the get-go. My mom voted straight ticket every time she voted. I used to tease her if Satan was a Democrat, at election time she would have followed him off the end of a cliff. I remember they used to laugh about the presi-



Linda  
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dential election between Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Herbert Hoover. My mom didn't drive and my dad wouldn't go to vote because he reasoned their votes would cancel themselves out. Sometimes my dad did vote Democrat, but that one election they stayed home.

Now Bob and I won't have to worry about driving to the polling place. We can sit down and vote anywhere we want. Maybe our easy chairs in front of the TV during a commercial is a fitting place or maybe Bob might vote while listening to the Vikings or Twins lose again in his bathroom, crying.

I'm an overachiever so I probably will sit down at the dining room table the day the ballot comes in the mail, vote and stick it right back in the stamped return envelope, strategically placing it so I will remember to walk to the mail box with it. If Bob wants me to carry his along, he will have to be quick.

It still bothers me a little to know, someone may see my voting preferences — even if it is my hubby. Remember, I said I'm an overachiever. I heard someone talking on the radio this week who said his family, when the children became old enough to vote, often requested absentee ballots and would sit together and vote at the same time, having intense conversation about each other's choices.

In this day and age, I can see many positive benefits. It is without a doubt more cost-efficient because election workers wouldn't be needed or available voting places and the government isn't the only one who will benefit. It can be very frustrating for voters who work all day and then race to the polls, to stand in line for a couple chicken scratches. It's no wonder voting percentages have dropped to such low levels. We are just too busy to deal with the bother anymore. I'm sure it won't be long and we will be eVoting from a secure site.

That would be progress. Now if we could just cut the pre-election whoopla down to 30 days of campaign ads and cap the dollars spent on trash talking commercials.

Oh well, another day, another column.

# THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

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Yankton Media, Inc., 319 Walnut St., Yankton, SD 57078

## OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

# 'Occupy' Issue Still Must Be Addressed

THE ROCHESTER (N.Y.) DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE (Sept. 17): One year after demonstrators took to the streets near Lower Manhattan's Zuccotti Park to protest the growing disparity between the rich and the poor, Occupy Wall Street-inspired encampments are largely gone, but the problems the movement highlighted remain stubbornly apparent nationwide...

The protests — which began in New York City on Sept. 17, 2011 — turned public attention to issues such as corporate malfeasance, big money in politics, deregulation of financial institutions and, foremost, income inequality.

It was a new kind of movement. No charismatic leaders; no big-monied, behind-the-scenes interests; just a seeming outpouring of frustration. The protests quickly changed the terms of debate on economic issues, distinguishing the haves and have-nots as the "1 percent" and the "99 percent."

While the movement has dissolved, the issues stuck. Indeed, whether the wealthiest should pay more in taxes has been the No. 1 issue differentiating President Barack Obama (who, in Occupy-like terms says they should "pay their fair share") and Republican challenger Mitt Romney (who argues for lower taxes for all). ...

Working groups that sprung out of the movement still meet regularly, focusing on issues such as election reform and fair working conditions for non-union employees. Other Occupy activists continue to network.

The Occupy movement may be fading but the issues it moved to the top of the political agenda — "political, civil and economic human rights," as one Occupy Rochester member described them — remain to be tackled, both nationally and locally.

## TODAY IN HISTORY

**By The Associated Press**  
Today is Thursday, Sept. 20, the 264th day of 2012. There are 102 days left in the year.

**Today's Highlight in History:** On Sept. 20, 1962, James Meredith, a black student, was blocked from enrolling at the University of Mississippi by Democratic Gov. Ross R. Barnett. (Meredith was later admitted.)

**On this date:** In 1519, Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan and his crew set out from Spain on five ships to find a western passage to the Spice Islands. (Magellan was killed enroute, but one of his ships eventually circled the world.)

In 1870, Italian troops took control of the Papal States, leading to the unification of Italy.

In 1873, panic swept the floor of the New York Stock Exchange in the wake of railroad bond defaults and bank failures.

In 1884, the National Equal Rights Party was formed during a convention of suffragists in San Francisco; the convention nominated Belva Ann Bennett Lockwood for president.

In 1911, the British liner *RMS Olympic* collided with the Royal Navy cruiser *HMS Hawke* off the Isle of Wight; although seriously damaged, the *Olympic* was able to return to Southampton under its own power.

In 1947, former New York City Mayor Fiorello La Guardia died.

In 1958, Martin Luther King Jr. was seriously wounded during a book signing at a New York City department store when Izola Curry stabbed him in the chest. (Curry was later found mentally incompetent.)

In 1967, the Cunard liner *RMS Queen Elizabeth 2* was christened by Britain's Queen Elizabeth II in Clydebank, Scotland.

In 1973, in their so-called "battle of the sexes," tennis star Billie Jean King defeated Bobby Riggs in straight sets, 6-4, 6-3, 6-3, at the Houston Astrodome.

In 1979, Jean-Bedel Bokassa, self-styled head of the Central African Empire, was overthrown in a French-supported coup while on a visit to Libya.

In 1980, Spectacular Bid, ridden by Bill Shoemaker, ran as the only entry in the Woodward Stakes at Belmont Park in New York after three potential challengers dropped out in horse racing's first walkover since 1949.

In 1996, President Bill Clinton announced that he was signing the Defense of Marriage Act, a bill outlawing same-sex marriages, but said it should not be used as an excuse for discrimination, violence or intimidation against gays and lesbians.

**Ten years ago:** President George W. Bush appealed to a reluctant Russian President Vladimir Putin to back a new U.N. resolution that would threaten Iraq with war if it did not disarm; Russian officials indicated there might be room for compromise. William Rosenberg, founder of the Dunkin' Donuts chain, died in Mashpee, Mass., at age 86.

**Five years ago:** President George W. Bush declined to criticize Blackwater USA, a security company in Iraq accused in a shooting that resulted in civilian deaths, saying investigators needed to determine if the guards violated rules governing their operations. Thousands of chanting demonstrators filled the streets of Jena, La., in support of six black teenagers initially charged with attempted murder in the beating of a white classmate. Floyd Landis lost his expensive and explosive case when two of three arbitrators upheld the results of a test that showed the 2006 Tour de France champion had used synthetic testosterone to fuel his spectacular comeback victory. (Landis forfeited his Tour title and was subject to a two-year ban, retroactive to Jan. 30, 2007.)

**One year ago:** Repeal of the U.S. military's 18-year-old "don't ask, don't tell" compromise took effect, allowing gay and lesbian service members to serve openly. A suicide bomber posing as a Taliban peace envoy assassinated former Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani, who had headed a government council seeking a political settlement with the insurgents.

**Today's Birthdays:** Singer Gogi Grant is 88. Actress-comedian Anne Meara is 83. Actress Sophia Loren is 78. Pro Football Hall of Famer Jim Taylor is 77. Rock musician Chuck Panozzo is 65. Actor Tony Denison is 63. Hockey Hall of Famer Guy Lafleur is 61. Actress Debbi Morgan is 61. Jazz musician Peter White is 58. Actress Betsy Brantley is 57. Actor Gary Cole is 56. TV news correspondent Deborah Roberts is 52. Country-rock musician Joseph Shreve (Flynnville Train) is 51. Rock musician Randy Bradbury (Pennsylvania) is 48. Actress Kristen Johnston is 45. Rock singers Gunnar Nelson and Matthew Nelson are 45. Rock musician Ben Shepherd is 44. Actress-model Moon Bloodgood is 37. Actor Jon Bernthal is 36. Rock musician Rick Woolstenhulme (Lifehouse) is 33. Actress Crystle Stewart is 31. Rapper Yung Joc is 30. Actor Aldis Hodge is 26.

**Thought for Today:** "Politics is very much like taxes — everybody is against them, or everybody is for them as long as they don't apply to him." — Fiorello La Guardia, New York City mayor (1882-1947).

## FROM THE BIBLE

*And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Revelation 21:2. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis*

## YOUR LETTERS

### HOPE's Success

Karen Edler, Yankton

On behalf of Team HOPE and the Jen and Dean Vaith family, I would like to thank everyone for the outpouring of donations, time and efforts of so many people to make the first Team HOPE Cancer Benefit better than ever imagined. It is such a blessed and humbling feeling to know that family, friends, neighbors, and complete strangers can join together for one single and worthy cause.

Thank you to the communities of Lesterville, Scotland, Menno, Tyndall, Tabor, and Yankton for showing your support in so many ways. A special thank you to the Lesterville Fire Department and Community Club for preparing for the benefit supper, auction, and dance.

Thank you to everyone for the outpouring of auction items, monetary donations, food, for so much of your time and your support. Thank you to Modern Woodman of Yankton and Thrivent Financial from Yankton, Bon Homme and

Hutchinson counties for their matching funds donations. It was the combined efforts of so many people that made this day so successful. It is amazing that one single email transpired into such a huge and rewarding event. A very special and heartwarming thank you to the Team HOPE committee for their endless hours of dedication. Without the combined efforts of all of you, there wouldn't have been such a grand turnout.

Team HOPE is dedicated to all those who've lost the fight against cancer and to those who won't quit. Join Team HOPE in our mission to find a cure and to help those families affected by cancer. Going forward, it is the goal of Team HOPE to continue to help individuals and families affected by cancer. A Team HOPE account has been established at the Federal Services Credit Union in Yankton for any donations. Follow us on Facebook (Team HOPE), or contact me at [TeamHOPErocks@yahoo.com](mailto:TeamHOPErocks@yahoo.com).

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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 & Dakotian, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078.

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