

THE HUFFINGTON POST

The Republican "Bubble" Is Yet to Be Popped

Joseph A. Palermo – December 4th, 2012

The rubbish that House Speaker John Boehner and other congressional Republicans keep dishing out about the federal budget shows the multimedia "bubble" that envelops the GOP and its mouthpieces is pretty durable. Even after Mitt Romney's loss at the hands of President Obama that "shocked" both the candidate and operators like Karl Rove, the "bubble" continues to blur their judgment even though a few of them are jumping ship.

Although the election proved that the Republicans' ideas of "self-deporting illegals," stripping reproductive rights away from women, and labeling working people "moochers" were toxic to voters the "bubble" that stopped them from realizing this fact might be resilient. At the time of this writing there has been an uptick in Republican Representatives and Senators formally breaking with their former master, the unelected oligarch Grover Norquist, on his nihilistic anti-tax "pledge." But for every Republican politician who seems to have realized that there was an election last month and the GOP's bankrupt economic ideas were handily thrashed there are ten or twenty (or thirty) who still cling to their economic fantasies as securely as they cling to their guns and bibles.

The Fox News/Drudge/Talk Radio components of the GOP bubble are well known but the other media outlets also carry water for the Far Right's prescriptions for economic health. When NBC's David Gregory, that fountainhead of all things Beltway, held court recently with Maria Bartiromo and Jim Cramer on *Meet the Press* nary a peep was heard in setting the record straight when this money-honey tag team insisted "entitlements" were the driving force behind the soaring national debt. Like David Brooks and other right-wing opinion makers, Gregory, Bartiromo, and Cramer apparently believe in the old George W. Bush tactic that by repeating a Big Lie over and over again it will seep into the nation's consciousness as somehow being "true."

So before the liberals write the GOP's obituary it would be wise to acknowledge the role other "bubbles" play in fortifying the Right's ability to invent new and ingenious ways to

get people to vote against their own self-interests (or at least see as "common sense" policies aimed at the budget deficit that undercut their economic well being).

Rather than one all-encompassing "bubble" that hermetically seals the Republicans inside their media universe there's no shortage of other equally important "bubbles" that serve corporate power. These bubbles often overlap in influence and personnel and still possess the awe-inspiring ability to persuade public opinion on the problems of greatest magnitude facing the United States today.

Although it was amusing on election night to see Karl Rove on Fox News refuse to accept the reality of President Obama's Ohio victory, we shouldn't be too quick to draw totalizing conclusions from the Democratic victories.

We still have to contend with the **Beltway Bubble** that also has its own logic and culture. Each week we're subjected to the spectacle of Washington Sunday talk shows where millionaire "hosts" interview millionaire politicians and pundits who interpret our politics and dispense their millionaire advice. This Beltway Bubble sets firm ideological limits on any debate and furthers the same worldview as does Fox News, Drudge, and Talk Radio, only with optics and atmospherics that seem slightly more erudite and "serious."

And then there's the **One-Percent Bubble**. This bubble also overlaps with the other two, but it has wider parameters. Mitt Romney handed the country a precious "gift" with his private disparaging at a billionaire fundraiser of "the 47 percent," as well as with his sour-grapes recap of why he lost. Throughout the course of the 2012 campaign the Republican candidate revealed himself as being sealed off inside the One Percent Bubble. Like the Jamie Dimons and the Lloyd Blankfeins and the John Thains, these oligarchs effortlessly pass through each of the other bubbles, but also have access to a different world where toying around with American politics is just a hobby like horsey ballet dressage, never a matter of any real consequence to their privileged lives. The One Percent Bubble has been on display of late in the form of the ultra-elitist "Fix the Debt" group of privileged CEOs calling for working people to "lower their expectations," forget about a comfortable retirement, affordable health care in old age, or college for their kids.

And let's not forget the **Think Tank Bubble**. This bubble functions as a manufacturing center of terrible ideas that serve corporate power and the 1 percent. It too overlaps with the other bubbles but specializes in providing pseudo-intellectual heft to all manner of rotten public policy choices. The American Enterprise Institute, the Heritage Foundation, the CATO Institute, the Hudson Institute, and the dozens of other corporate funded right-wing think tanks construct their own universe that doesn't bother with peer reviews from academia or anyone else associated with those dreaded outposts of liberal indoctrination: Universities. Some of these think tanks consciously cultivate a "bipartisan" veneer and even have "liberal" sounding prescriptions. The Think Tank Bubble gave us the idea that a rise in the retirement age is a good way to deal with the

manufactured "crisis" in "entitlements." Previously, this bubble has extolled the wisdom of deregulating the financial services sector and invading Iraq. Now these bubble boys have all manner of serious sounding "policy papers" and "studies" identifying the benefits to American society of shredding the safety net and imposing austerity. And why have they reached these conclusions? Because their corporate and billionaire sponsors want those conclusions.

So let's not become too smug as we watch night after night Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert deconstruct the Fox News/Drudge/Talk Radio bubble when there are other bubbles that must be dealt with before the debate on our national priorities has a chance of becoming less polluted.