

**MOVEMENT TRANSCENDS POLITICS**  
**BY LANI VAN PETTEN, ORMOND BEACH**  
December 5, 2011

Jonah Goldberg's recent column, "Puppets and professors: Does the 'Occupy' crowd realize it's alienating the working class?" is an excellent analysis of partisan politics, not of the Occupy movement.

The magnetic power of this movement is precisely its fundamental agreement to transcend partisan politics!

Is the Occupy movement alienating our working class, or is Goldberg?

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**DON'T BLAME OBAMA**  
**BY CAROLYN WEST, ORMOND BEACH**  
November 30, 2011

Columnist Michael Gerson, in his Nov. 25 column "Obama let it fail," seems to be rewriting the U.S Constitution. Last time I read it, that document made much of the "separation of powers" -- creating three co-equal branches of government. Normally, if one of those branches tried to control another, all hell would break loose. For example, if the president tried to direct the outcome of congressional action, howls of protest would accuse him of overstepping.

Recently, Congress delegated the job of trying to resolve the impasse over next year's federal budget to a supercommittee. Last week, that group failed to agree on a 10-year plan for \$1.5 trillion in deficit reduction. In Gerson's column, he suggests that the problem would have been solved if only the president had made an effort to "prod, plead, cajole, demand and threaten" members of the committee.

Congress established the supercommittee in the first place because it found its own members, at large, intractable. It's obvious to most fair-minded people that we need more revenue, but raising (tax) revenue seems to be political kryptonite, dooming those who try for a rational approach to balancing tax cuts and tax increases to the end of their political careers.

Like spoiled children, our representatives in Congress cling to the Bush tax cuts as if they were Holy Writ. (Those tax cuts were questionable in the first place, suggested by the Bush White House when the country was running a budget surplus inherited from the Clinton era.)

Now Gerson suggests that Obama should have waded into that fight. Amazing! As if the guy didn't have enough to do, dealing with winding down

two wars, angry "Occupy" movements at home, the staggering economy, the political pots boiling in the Middle East, etc.

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## **DON'T PUSH RELIGION**

**BY BARBARA TRACY, ORMOND BEACH**

November 12, 2011

Reading about the latest bill to overwhelmingly pass the House and move to the Senate for a vote (House Concurrent Resolution 13) and the numerous letters to the editors concerning the separation of church and state, I could no longer keep quiet. H. Con. Res 13 is attempting to "reaffirm" this country's motto: "In God We Trust." This was adopted as a national motto in 1956. The original motto adopted in 1782 is "E Pluribus Unum," which means "out of many, one." This is certainly more appropriate.

This country was not founded on Judeo-Christian principles. If it must be categorized, it was founded more on humanist principles. The fact that they overlap does not challenge this fact. A recent poll revealed that 16 percent of Americans did not identify with any faith and millions of Americans are Buddhist, Hindu or other religions that do not identify with a monotheistic god. Our founding fathers were very careful that this new country would not dictate what religion or belief the citizens must follow. Freedom to follow any belief or religion or even no religion or belief was guaranteed. The separation of church and state is firmly cemented in this country's foundation and is something to zealously defend!

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## **A CLEAR VIEW OF JOBS ISSUES**

**BY EDWARD FLANAGAN, ORMOND BEACH**

November 12, 2011

An excellent Oct. 31 letter, "Jobs problems run deep," says that our jobs problem is all-encompassing and caused by technological displacement of the need for human labor. Many years ago, and emphasized by the glorious developments displayed at the 1939-40 World's Fair, we were told that our future would see many innovative improvements in all aspects of our lives. The expected outcome was to be a better life for all and more leisure time in which to enjoy labor- and money-saving devices, more family time, education, and relative economic security. Well, while many of us were buying "shares" in expected profits, the smart guys were learning how to gamble with OPM (Other Peoples' Money) and begging for (and buying) deregulation. Technology helped them go global to save on taxes and labor. . The result? Along with huge bonuses, the wealthy and well-connected enjoy their leisure in mansions beyond imagination, while the millions of poverty-stricken families and unemployed former workers molder in leisure time they can't enjoy while barely subsisting on handouts from a debt-ridden government. .

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**RULES TOO HARSH FOR FELONS**  
**BY PATRICIA TUGAS, ORMOND BEACH**

As pointed out in the letter of Sept. 9, "Suspicion stymies defense," the state of Florida has put almost impossible requirements on felons in order to have their civil rights restored.

It is a shame and a disgrace.

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**REGULATIONS NEEDED**  
**CAROLYN WEST, ORMOND BEACH**  
**August 28, 2011 Letters to the Editor**

In an August 20 letter, "Playing political, economic games," the writer blames "big government" for the financial crisis of the past few years. In fact, while it remains a complex problem, one cause of the crisis involved lack of government regulation. Ms. Scalise should remember that the business friendly Bush administration's hands-off policies helped encourage the risky practices, such as predatory lending and speculation, that fueled the crisis.

The U.S. Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission concluded in January 2011 that "the crisis was avoidable and was caused by widespread failures in financial regulation."

The writer accuses the Obama administration of "making it tougher" for students to get college loans from private banks. She does not mention that the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2009 (SAFRA) actually makes paying for college easier and safer for students. The bill will make college more affordable by making the government the direct lender, rather than banks.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office found that allowing private lenders to continue originating loans "would cost the federal government an additional \$13 billion with no apparent benefit to students." Eliminating the middle man benefits not only these students and their families, but the American taxpayer as well.

When college students graduate, they are less likely to be burdened with large debt as they enter the job market, making it more likely they can pay off their loans. The government itself is no longer paying expensive subsidies to private lenders.

Interestingly, organizations like the United States Student Association and

the American Council on Education supported SAFRA, while credit agencies and finance companies opposed it. Are these perhaps the same agencies and companies that helped fuel the banking crisis with predatory lending ?

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### **AN OAK TREE AND A STAND**

By **BARBARA WAITE SANDBERG**, Ormond Beach

July 20, 2011

Posted in: Letters to the Editor Ethel Waite The Sunday News-Journal photo of Laura Jones standing in front of a historic old oak tree brings back a memory of my childhood when my mother stood in front of a similar old oak on Riverside Drive in Holly Hill. Guarding the tree, my mother, Ethel Waite, would not move as a bulldozer approached. I remember the bulldozer approaching her, backing up and charging her again and again as the driver yelled at her to get out of the way. She would not move. I was crying as I watched this game of chicken. Finally the dozer left and never came back. My mother had won!

Today there is a small riverfront park in Holly Hill dedicated to Ethel Waite, a civic leader, teacher and long-time resident. In that park on Riverside Drive near 14th Street, one can enjoy the shade of a big beautiful oak tree.

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### **DISGUSTED WITH POLITICS**

BY **MARTI KING**, ORMOND BEACH

July 4, 2011

I totally agree with the person who wrote the "Fed up with both parties" letter, saying he is "totally disappointed in and disgusted with our political system." Most of our politicians are so tied up with chasing the money that they don't have time to bother thinking in terms of the needs of the voters. Hey, it's not their sons and daughters who are fighting these useless wars, or who are homeless and begging for a bite to eat.

The author of another letter, "Who's fighting democracy," used a haunting line by Fran Lebowitz: "In the Soviet Union, capitalism triumphed over communism. In this country, capitalism triumphed over democracy."

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### **MAKE POLLUTERS PAY**

BY **CAROLYN WEST**, ORMOND BEACH

June 21, 2011

The federal Environmental Protection Agency might possibly soon force the state of Florida to clean up its waterways. Your June 17 editorial insists that such "looming regulations" would be "maddening" because the EPA may require the state to pay for cleanup costs. Those costs "may top \$200 million annually" although your editorial maintains that (unnamed) "industrial sources" claim the costs could reach \$21 billion.

You seem to assume that taxpayers will be footing this bill. This might be appropriate since the pollution of our water seems to result from casual enforcement of clean-water rules by our state Department of Environmental Protection. We citizens should have been holding the DEP accountable for cleaning up this mess long before now. For far too long we have allowed industrial and agricultural waste to be dumped into our water. At the same time, for far too long, we all have assumed that clean water is a "free" resource.

However, how about those "industrial sources" who seem to want to get a pass here, and frighten the rest of us into resisting the federal government's rules? Much of the pollution, as you mention, results from "discharge of treated wastewater and manufacturing facilities" as well as "fertilizers and pesticides" that are washed into streams and rivers. No doubt those industrial sources will once again insist that such costs will threaten our weak economy -- and insist that once again, the state's taxpayers should carry the financial burden. Once again they will paint the federal governmental agency as "the bad guy."

But, simply put, why shouldn't those polluters pay for the cost of cleaning up their mess?

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## A HOLIDAY OPPORTUNITY

BY BARBARA WAITE SANDBERG, ORMOND BEACH

May 30, 2011

If you are looking for something to do on Memorial Day, you may want to tour the Merci Boxcar, located next to the Holly Hill City Hall on Ridgewood Avenue. This boxcar was built between 1872 and 1885, and may have been used during the Franco-Prussian War. During World War I, it was used as a transport for our troops. After World War II, it was used in the "American Friendship Train" to distribute over 700 carloads of food, fuel and clothing from the American people to the devastated people in France and Italy.

The French people sent 49 of these boxcars to us in the United States, filled with 250 tons of gratitude, letters and gifts, for each of our states, and one to be shared between the District of Columbia and the then-territory of Hawaii. My mother, Ethel Waite, who died in 2001, was thrilled when her Holly Hill, out of the entire state of Florida, received one.

With this boxcar, the French people thanked the American people who sacrificed, fought and died so that the French people could be free. The National American Legion held their convention here recently to take part in an amazing ceremony at the boxcar. This ceremony, with the 21-gun salute, the color guard, the flag ceremony and the bugler was quite a show.

This Memorial Day, I will think about the meaning of the Empty Chair Ceremony that I witnessed on that day. If you want to be reminded of what

Memorial Day is all about, visit the Merci Boxcar and then go into the Holly Hill City Hall and view the display, the mini boxcar and photographs of our troops. Take your children if you can.

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**CHEERING A MORAL VICTORY**  
**BY ED KOLASKA, ORMOND BEACH**  
**May 16, 2011**

Responding to the letter May 7, "Hard to cheer a death," I would point out that there have been many times in American history when the masses have cheered events that have benefited the moral majority, not only in America, but throughout the world. Specifically, these events would include, but would not be limited to, the end of World War I and World War II, the deaths of Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, etc.

Were we, as Americans, "celebrating" the demise of the enemy? Perhaps. But, there is also a sense of pent-up relief and satisfaction in the outcome that comes forth, from years of knowing how these enemies have brutally tortured and killed millions of innocent people.

This sense of relief now is exhibited by many throughout the world, with the end of the life of Osama bin Laden. Since the 1990s, that individual was directly linked to countless incidents as the mastermind of a terrorist network. He seemed invincible. He and his terrorist buddies thrived on vengeance, whether we celebrated or not. His death will only be a hiccup in our relentless war on terror.

I, and those cheering the result in Pakistan, applaud the efforts of our military in the war on terrorism. The terrorists are not fragmented, and will continue to try to disrupt our lives. As long as we have these victories (be they major or minor), we deserve to cheer those who dare to take on these assassins. God bless the USA! Let freedom ring! Cheer your brains out!

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**GRADING PRESIDENT OBAMA**  
**Sunday April 17, 2011**  
**EDWARD FLANAGAN**  
**Ormond Beach**

On the economy, he has done too much, as it was already beginning to turn around from previous efforts. Grade: C.

On the deficit, it is obvious that spending more than is taken into the treasury continues to be the way to go. No real effort is being made to truly get us back in the black, and that includes replacing purloined funds from Medicare. Grade: D.

On national security and foreign policy, I believe the government is doing what it should do: overseeing emerging democracies. We cannot afford to take care of the world, so being supportive is the best that can be done.

Grade: C.

On health care, it is not constitutionally acceptable to punish those who do not have insurance with a fine. Taxes allow for funding of the Medicaid program. It should be used for that purpose. Grade: D.

On communication, he is an activist. He knows how to get things started, but he has no idea how to carry it to fruition. Grade: D.

I feel that he is growing in his position, but that he was seriously underprepared to handle the highest position in the world. He does not understand the financial status of most blue-collar workers, and he does not have a real grasp of any of the most important issues. I feel that he is a mediocre Grade C overall.

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**QUICK RESPONSE TO STORM**  
**BY BARBARA EVELEIGH, PALM COAST**  
April 9, 2011

The tornado warning, high winds and swirling rain were frightening the evening of March 30. About 4:45 p.m., the power died and all the traffic lights were not working. Within 10 minutes every busy intersection had a Flagler County sheriff's deputy directing traffic! I'm sure many accidents were avoided. They saved me a lot of anxiety driving home.

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**TUNE IN BEFORE JUDGING NPR**  
**BY CAROLYN WEST, ORMOND BEACH**  
March 22, 2011

Posted in: Letters to the Editor

How strange that The News-Journal seems to reprint columns by Cal Thomas nearly every other week -- or should I call them "fulminations" instead? His latest attack on public broadcasting as "National Pathetic Radio" (March 16) is such an example.

Thomas claims that "large numbers of people believe that NPR and broadcast networks are hostile to their beliefs." He provides no evidence for this claim, and besides, how does reporting, for example, on the Japanese struggle with their crippled nuclear power station have anything to do with beliefs? Perhaps this "large number of people" do not listen to NPR. If not, how would they know?

Thomas gives little evidence that he himself actually listens to NPR, as his examples seem to come from the right-wing echo chamber of Rush Limbaugh or Glenn Beck instead. His example of "Wait, Wait, Don't Tell Me" misses the point that it is satire.

If he doesn't listen to such programs as "Morning Edition" and "All Things Considered," he is missing a great deal. Especially during this period of unrest in the Middle East, Libya, and the aftermath of the tsunami in Japan, public radio provides the sober and serious reporting that we need to understand the complexity of our modern world.

NPR has room for detailed analysis and interviews with individuals in far-flung corners of the world because it does not fill up half the air time with noisy commercials. What a loss if Thomas and his ilk succeed in torpedoing NPR off the airwaves. Because it is public radio, NPR strives to present programming that examines several sides of an issue -- and its real "fair and balanced" reporting is a national treasure. Cal should tune in.

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**Community Voices by Dan Kennedy "FLORIDA SHOULD COMMIT TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS" February 27, 2011**

**"FLORIDA SHOULD COMMIT TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS"**

**BY DAN KENNEDY, GUEST OPINION**

**February 27, 2011**

Dan Kennedy, of Ormond Beach, is retired from a career that combined education and psychology, mainly in university settings in Oregon, Hawaii and Florida. He was also a licensed psychologist in Florida and Hawaii, and served as adjunct faculty at the University of Central Florida and Nova Southeastern University. For some time now, we have been hearing about the low ranking of U.S. K-12 education, as compared with other countries that make up the developed world. This is also the case concerning comparisons of Florida K-12 education with the other states within our nation.

Low rankings in education are clearly a matter for concern. With regard to Florida, many state leaders are keen on using an education voucher system as a means of making things better. There are several reasons why this approach is not a good idea; reasons having both philosophical and practical implications. History has shown that a strong, well-informed middle class with clout is necessary for the development and maintenance of a democratic form of government. Universal public education, a traditional hallmark of our nation, is one of the most important aspects in the maintenance of a strong middle class. In the past few years, there have been legal issues regarding the constitutionality of vouchers, especially the matter

of state-church separation. While the constitutional legitimacy question may not yet be resolved, thus far court decisions have seemed generally in support of public education. I certainly hope that this will continue to be the case. One reason for saying this is that private schools are more likely to have a value agenda regarding social, economic, political, and/or religious philosophy. That is OK, and provides a service to families that want their offspring exposed to certain value orientations.

On the other hand, in a democracy, public schools should teach about the philosophical areas noted above, but certainly should not teach them, per se. This is especially important in an ethnically diverse society. For example, as a part of history, public schools may legitimately teach about different kinds of world religions, but should not be an advocate for any particular religion. Proponents of voucher systems have proposed that this would help to improve public schools. There are some very practical questions that should be researched regarding this idea. I will mention a few.

How many countries ranking above the U.S. in academic achievement use voucher systems at the K-12 level? How many states ranking above Florida use voucher systems? If it should be found that voucher programs appear not to make a difference in academic skill and knowledge acquisition, then what are the variables that make the difference?

Might it be that the percentage of children and youth living below the poverty line is among the variables that make the difference? It is known that the percentage of children in the U.S. living below the poverty line (using official government figures) is greater than some countries that rank above us in educational attainment. The extent to which poverty could be a pertinent variable could be researched. Such research could include comparisons among nation states, and also among various locales within the U.S. as to relationships between academic achievement and degrees of poverty. Another interesting research area would be comparing achievement levels of public schools with private schools and home schooling. Actually there has been some research on these questions, but there is a need for more, carefully and objectively planned and conducted. Based on what I know at this point, I wouldn't put any money on voucher programs as a means of improving things.

In addition to a valuing of the separation of state and church and the maintenance of a democratic form of government, there should be answers to the research questions stated above before considering the implementation of an education voucher program. Without seriously considering these philosophical issues and the practical research necessary for informed decision-making, the implementation of vouchers surely indicates a "giving up" on public schools, and may even suggest a plan aimed at destroying

**public education. The emphasis should be on finding ways to maximize the effectiveness of public schools.**