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Without a Debt Deal, Obama Can Make the Rich Pay
Moshe Adler, Truthdig July 29, 2011
Moshe Adler writes, "If Congress does not reach an agreement, and the deficit remains unfunded, this will give the president an unprecedented opportunity to expose who the government really serves, because it will be up to him alone, no agreement from Congress would be necessary to decide where to cut."
READ MORE http://www.readersupportednews.org/off-site-opinion-section/72-72/6812-without-a-debt-deal-obama-can-make-the-rich-pay

Clergy Arrested in Capitol Budget Protest
United Press International  July 29, 2011
Intro: "Eleven religious leaders were arrested staging a sit-in in the Capitol rotunda to protest budget cuts."
Matt Taibbi | Obama Doesn't Want a Progressive Deficit Deal
Rolling Stone Blog? July 2011
Matt Taibbi writes: "I simply don't believe the Democrats would really be worse off with voters if they committed themselves to putting people back to work, policing Wall Street, throwing their weight behind a real public option in health care, making hedge fund managers pay the same tax rates as ordinary people, ending the pointless wars abroad, etc. That they won't do these things because they're afraid of public criticism, and 'responding to pressure,' is an increasingly transparent lie. This 'Please, Br'er Fox, don't throw me into dat dere briar patch' deal isn't going to work for much longer. Just about everybody knows now that they want to go into that briar patch."
READ MORE  http://readersupportednews.org/off-site-opinion-section/72-72/6576-obama-doesnt-want-a-progressive-deficit-deal

How President Obama Can Reclaim His Green Creds
Michael Brune, Los Angeles Times  July 11, 2011
Michael Brune writes: "Environmentalists worked hard to help Barack Obama win the presidency. Three years later, many of us are disappointed with the administration's environmental record. Although headlines proclaiming that Al Gore 'condemned,' 'blasted' or 'slammed' the president in his recent Rolling Stone essay were exaggerated, there's no skirting the administration's failure to take bold action on protecting our communities, rivers, lakes, oceans, wild lands, air and climate."
READ MORE  http://readersupportednews.org/opinion2/271-38/6574-how-president-obama-can-reclaim-his-green-creds

Greenwald | Obama Gutting Core Principles of Democratic Party
Glenn Greenwald, Guardian UK
Excerpt: "The same Democratic president who supported the transfer of $700 billion to bail out Wall Street banks, who earlier this year signed an extension of Bush's massive tax cuts for the wealthy, and who has escalated America's bankruptcy-inducing posture of Endless War, is now trying to reduce the debt by cutting benefits for America's most vulnerable - at the exact time that economic insecurity and income inequality are at all-time highs."
READ MORE  http://www.readersupportednews.org/opinion2/277-75/6703-obama-gutting-core-principles-of-democratic-party

Nicholas D. Kristof, "Bonuses for Billionaires"
The New York Times
Excerpt: "Why would we impose 'job-crushing taxes' on wealthy Americans
just to pay for luxuries like federal prisons? Why end the 'carried interest' tax loophole for financiers, just to pay for unemployment benefits - especially when those same selfless tycoons are buying yachts and thus creating jobs for all the rest of us? Hmmm. The truth is that House Republicans don’t actually go far enough. They should follow the logic of their more visionary members with steps like these."

READ MORE http://www.readersupportednews.org/off-site-opinion-section/72-72/6702-bonuses-for-billionaires


What haunts the Obama administration is what still haunts the country: the stunning lack of accountability for the greed and misdeeds that brought America to its gravest financial crisis since the Great Depression. There has been no legal, moral, or financial reckoning for the most powerful wrongdoers. Nor have there been meaningful reforms that might prevent a repeat catastrophe. Time may heal most wounds, but not these. Chronic unemployment remains a constant, painful reminder of the havoc inflicted on the bust’s innocent victims. As the ghost of Hamlet’s father might have it, America will be stalked by its foul and unresolved crimes until they “are burnt and purged away.”

After the 1929 crash, and thanks in part to the legendary Ferdinand Pecora’s fierce thirties Senate hearings, America gained a Securities and Exchange Commission, the Public Utility Holding Company Act, and the Glass-Steagall Act to forestall a rerun. After the savings-and-loan debacle of the eighties, some 800 miscreants went to jail. But those who ran the central financial institutions of our fiasco escaped culpability (as did most of the institutions). As the indefatigable Matt Taibbi has tabulated, law enforcement on Obama’s watch rounded up 393,000 illegal immigrants last year and zero bankers. The Justice Department’s ballyhooed Operation Broken Trust has broken still more trust by chasing mainly low-echelon, one-off Madoff wannabes. You almost have to feel sorry for the era’s designated Goldman scapegoat, 32-year-old flunky “Fabulous Fab” Fabrice Tourre, who may yet take the fall for everyone else. It’s as if the Watergate investigation were halted after the cops nabbed the nudniks who did the break-in.

Even now, on the heels of Bank of America’s reluctant $8.5 billion settlement with investors who held its mortgage-backed securities, the Obama administration may be handing it and its peers new get-out-of-jail-free cards. With the Department of Justice’s blessing, the Iowa attorney general, Tom Miller, is pushing the 49 other states to sign on to a national financial settlement ending their investigations of the biggest mortgage lenders. What some call a settlement others may find a cover-up. Time reported in April that the lawyer negotiating with Miller for Moynihan’s Bank of America just happened to be a contributor to his 2010 Iowa reelection campaign. If the deal is struck, any truly aggressive state attorneys general, like Eric Schneiderman of New York, will be shut down before they can dig into the full and still mostly uninvestigated daisy chain of get-rich-quick rackets practiced by banks as they repackaged junk mortgages into junk securities.
Those in executive suites at the top of that chain have long since fled the scene with the proceeds, while bleeding shareholders, investors, homeowners, and cashiered employees were left with the bills. The weak Dodd-Frank financial-reform law that rose from the ruins remains largely inoperative, since the actual rule-writing was delegated to understaffed agencies now under siege by banking lobbyists and their well-greased congressional overlords. The administration’s much-hyped Consumer Financial Protection Bureau is being sabotaged by Washington Republicans intent on blocking any White House nominee, whether Elizabeth Warren or some malleable hack, to lead it. “We can’t let special interests win this fight,” said Obama when he proposed the agency in October 2009. Well, he missed his moment to fight for both it and Warren, and the special interests won without breaking a sweat. Rather than purge the crash’s crimes, Wall Street’s leaders are sticking to their alibi: Everyone was guilty of fomenting this “perfect storm,” and so no one is. Too-big-to-fail banks are bigger than ever, and Masters of the Universe swagger is back. Even Jamie Dimon of JPMorgan Chase, about the only bank chief not to be caught with a suspect balance sheet or a $1,400 office trash can, has taken to channeling Schwarzman. In June, he publicly challenged Ben Bernanke about the intolerable burdens of potential regulation—this despite a 67 percent surge in JPMorgan’s first-quarter profits and a 1,500 percent raise in his own compensation from 2009 to 2010. As good times roar back for corporate America, it’s bad enough that CEOs are collectively sitting on some $1.9 trillion in cash—much of it parked out of the IRS’s reach overseas—instead of hiring. (How many jobs can you buy for $1.9 trillion? America’s total expenditure on the Iraq and Afghanistan wars over a decade has been $1.3 trillion.) But what’s most galling is how many of these executives are sore winners, crying all the way to Palm Beach while raking in record profits and paying some of the lowest tax rates over the past 50 years. The fallout has left Obama in the worst imaginable political bind. No good deed he’s done for Wall Street has gone unpunished. He is vilified as an anti-capitalist zealot not just by Republican foes but even by some former backers. What has he done to deserve it? All anyone can point to is his December 2009 60 Minutes swipe at “fat-cat bankers on Wall Street”—an inept and anomalous Ed Schultz seizure that he retracted just weeks later by praising Dimon and Lloyd Blankfein as “very savvy businessmen.”

Geoffrey R. Stone, “Our Untransparent President”

*The New York Times*

Geoffrey R. Stone writes: "The record of the Obama administration on this fundamental issue of American democracy has surely fallen short of expectations. This is a lesson in 'trust us.' Those in power are always certain that they themselves will act reasonably, and they resist limits on their own discretion. The problem is, 'trust us' is no way to run a self-governing society."

READ MORE  [http://readersupportednews.org/off-site-opinion-section/72-72/6492-focus-frank-rich-obamas-original-sin](http://readersupportednews.org/off-site-opinion-section/72-72/6492-focus-frank-rich-obamas-original-sin)

[http://readersupportednews.org/off-site-opinion-section/72-72/6417-our-untransparent-president](http://readersupportednews.org/off-site-opinion-section/72-72/6417-our-untransparent-president)
Rescind Obama’s "Transparency Award" Now!

This page can be reached at http://takeawardback.org

Scroll down to see list of signers and to add your name or that of your organization.

Tell Project on Government Oversight (POGO), OMB Watch, the National Security Archive, Open the Government.Org, and the Reporters Committee to publicly take back their Transparency Award to President Obama.

On March 28, 2011, President Obama was given a "transparency award" from five "open government" organizations: OMB Watch, the National Security Archive, the Project on Government Oversight, the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, and OpenTheGovernment.org. Ironically -- and quite likely in response to growing public criticism regarding the Obama Administration’s lack of transparency -- heads of the five organizations gave their award to Obama in a closed, undisclosed meeting at the White House. If the ceremony had been open to the press, it is likely that reporters would have questioned the organizations' proffered justification for the award, in contrast to the current reality:

- President Obama has not decreased but has dramatically increased governmental secrecy! According to a new report to the president by the Information Security Oversight Office (ISOO) -- the federal agency that provides oversight of the government’s security classification system -- the cost of classification for 2010 has reached over $10.17 billion. That's a 15 percent jump from the previous year, and the first time ever that secrecy costs have surpassed $10 billion. Last month, ISOO reported that the number of original classification decisions generated by the Obama administration in 2010 was 224,734 -- a 22.6 percent jump from the previous year. See "The Price of Secrecy, Obama Edition".

- There were 544,360 requests for information last year under the Freedom of Information Act to the 35 biggest federal agencies -- 41,000 requests more than the year before. Yet the bureaucracy responded to 12,400 fewer requests than the prior year, according to an analysis by the Associated Press.
• Obama has invoked baseless and unconstitutional executive secrecy to quash legal inquiries into secret illegalities more often than any predecessor. The list of this President's invocations of the "state secrets privilege" has already resulted in shutting down lawsuits involving the National Security Agency's illegal wiretapping -- Jewel vs. NSA and Shubert vs. Obama; extraordinary rendition and assassination -- Anwar al-Aulaqi; and illegal torture -- Binyam Mohamed.

• Ignoring his campaign promise to protect government whistleblowers, Obama’s presidency has amassed the worst record in US history for persecuting, prosecuting, and jailing government whistleblowers and truth-tellers. President Obama's behavior has been in stark contrast to his campaign promises which included live streaming meetings online and rewarding whistleblowers. Obama’s Department of Justice is twisting the 1917 Espionage Act to press criminal charges in five alleged instances of national-security leaks -- more such prosecutions than have occurred in all previous Administrations combined.

• The Obama DOJ's prosecution of former NSA official Thomas Drake who, up till June 9, faced 35 years in prison for having blown the whistle on the NSA’s costly and unlawful warrantless monitoring of American citizens typifies the abusive practices made possible through expansive secrecy agreements and threats of prosecution.

• President Obama has set a powerful and chilling example for potential whistleblowers through the abuse and torture of Bradley Manning, whose guilt he has also publicly stated prior to any trial by his, Obama’s, military subordinates.

• Obama is the only president who has reenacted Fahrenheit 451 by actually having his agency collect and burn a book due to a never-justified classification excuse: Lt. Col Tony Shaffer’s Operation Dark Heart.

• Under President Obama, the FBI has launched a series of raids and issued grand jury subpoenas targeting nearly two dozen antiwar activists. Over two thousand six hundred arrests of protesters in the US have been made while Obama has been president, further encroaching on the exercise of First Amendment rights.

• President Obama has initiated a secret assassination program, has publicly announced that he has given himself the power to include Americans on the list of people to be assassinated, and has attempted to assassinate at least one, Anwar al-Aulaqi.
• President Obama has maintained the power to secretly kidnap, imprison, rendition, or torture, and he has formalized the power to lawlessly imprison in an executive order. This also means the power to secretly imprison. There are some 1,700 prisoners outside the rule of law in Bagram alone.

• The Obama Administration is also busy going after reporters to discover their sources and convening grand juries in order to target journalists and news publishers.

• President Obama promised to reveal White House visitors’ logs. He didn’t. In response to outrage over his refusal to reveal the names of health insurance CEOs he had met with and cut deals with on the health insurance reform bill, he announced that he would release the names going forward, but not those in the past. And going forward he would withhold names he chose to withhold. White House staff then began regularly meeting lobbyists just off White House grounds in order to avoid the visitors’ logs.

• President Obama has sent representatives to aggressively pressure Spain, England, and Germany to shut down investigations that could have exposed the crimes of the Bush era, just as he has instructed the US DOJ to avoid such matters. This includes his refusal to allow prosecutions of the CIA for torture, following a public letter from 8 previous heads of the CIA informing him that he had better not enforce those laws.

The "transparency award" in question was described as "aspirational," similar to the rationale for awarding Obama the Nobel Peace Prize early in his presidency when he had done nothing yet to further the cause of peace. Participants admitted they used the private meeting in March to try and lobby Obama to do more to earn their award. If the President doesn’t change course as a result of the lobbying and "award," there are some who would shrug and say, "no harm, no foul." The giving of an unmerited award, however, whether for transparency or peace, is not entirely benign! No one knows better how destructive secrecy is for maintaining systems of justice, ethics and democracy than these self-proclaimed "open government" watchdogs. Especially when such a false accolade emanates, as in this case, from those who are supposed to serve as counters to secrecy and to retaliation against government whistleblowers, such appearance of approval will tend to cover up and mask the reality of the Executive’s increasingly undemocratic and illegal use of secrecy.

Therefore the undersigned call on these organizations: OMB Watch, the National Security Archive, the Project on Government Oversight, the Reporters Committee for Freedom of
the Press, and OpenTheGovernment.org, to publicly take back their "transparency award," as difficult as that may be, from Barack Obama. The watchdog organizations should, of course, continue to promote aspirations for open, democratic government, reduced secrecy and adherence to the rule of law, in more genuine, legitimate ways than giving unmerited awards to the Executive. Such false awards only stand to backfire and hurt the cause of open government.

Drafted by FBI Whistleblowers Sibel Edmonds and Coleen Rowley

Whistleblowers:

Raymond L. McGovern- Former Analyst, CIA
Colonel Ann Wright- US Army Reserve (Ret.) and Former US diplomat
Daniel Ellsberg- Former Official, Department of Defense and Department of State
Lt. Colonel Tony Shaffer- Senior Intelligence Officer (Operations), DIA
Jesselyn Radack- Former Attorney, Department of Justice
John M. Cole- Former Veteran Intelligence Operations Specialist, FBI
David “Mark” Conrad- Agent in Charge (Ret.), Internal Affairs, U.S. Customs
P. Jeffrey Black, Air Marshal- (Ret.) Federal Air Marshal Service, Department of Homeland Security

Bogdan Dzakovic- Former Red Team Leader, FAA
Russ Tice- Former Senior Intelligence Analyst, NSA
Sandalio Gonzalez- Special Agent in Charge (Ret.), DEA
John Vincent- Veteran Special Agent, Counterterrorism, FBI
Bill Bergman- Financial Market Analyst, Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago
Steve Jenkins- Intelligence Analyst, NGIC, US Army
Linda Lewis- Policy Analyst (Ret.), U.S. Department of Agriculture
David MacMichael PhD- Former Senior Estimates Officer, CIA
William H. Russell- Computer Specialist, R and E Division, NSA
William Savich- Special Agent, Bureau of Diplomatic Security, Department of State
Julia Davis- Customs and Border Protection Officer, Department of Homeland Security
Tom Maertens- Counter-Terrorism Official (Ret.), Department of State
Joseph Carson- PE, Nuclear Safety Engineer, Department of Energy
Gabe Bruno- Manager (Ret.), Flight Standards Services, FAA
Dr. Jeffrey Fudin- Founder, VA Whistleblowers Coalition

Organizations:
Peter Hart, Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting (FAIR)

Excerpt: "The White House threatened Thursday to exclude the San Francisco Chronicle from pooled coverage of its events in the Bay Area after the paper posted a video of a protest at a San Francisco fundraiser for President Obama last week."

READ MORE  http://readersupportednews.org/off-site-news-section/368-wikileaks/5789-white-house-threatens-to-blacklist-paper-for-covering-protest

Ann Wright, “Obama's Influence on Bradley Manning Court-Martial”

Open Mike Blog

Intro: "The challenges to President and Commander-in-Chief Obama and his administration on the treatment of Bradley Manning continue, particularly on Obama's pre-trial statement of guilt that Manning 'broke the law.' Can a military court-martial consider the Commander-In-Chief's comment on Manning's guilt as government malfeasance similar to the conduct of President Nixon when he authorized the break-in of the psychiatrist office of Pentagon Papers whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg? Nixon called Ellsberg 'the most dangerous man in America.'"

READ MORE  http://www.readersupportednews.org/off-site-opinion-section/369-wikileaks/5780-obamas-influence-on-bradley-manning-court-martial

Glenn Greenwald: “Obama Speaks on Manning and the Rule of Law”

Common Dreams

Excerpt: "Obama said this when justifying Manning's treatment, 'We're a nation of laws. We don't let individuals make their own decisions about how the laws operate. He broke the law.' The impropriety of Obama's public pre-trial declaration of Manning's guilt ('He broke the law') is both gross and manifest. How can Manning possibly expect to receive a fair hearing from military officers when their Commander-in-Chief has already decreed his guilt?"

READ MORE  http://readersupportednews.org/off-site-news-section/368-wikileaks/5722-obama-speaks-on-manning-and-the-rule-of-law

“Why Obama Gets Four More Years in White House” by Ralph Nader

- Apr 27, 2011

The stars are aligned for Barack Obama’s re-election in November 2012. He won’t join Jimmy Carter to be the second Democrat in 120 years to lose a second term.
Five things are playing in Obama’s favor. Read more
http://www.readersupportednews.org/off-site-opinion-section/72-72/5771-obama-will-have-four-more-years

END OF OBAMA NEWSLETTER #4