

## An R-Rated Rant

Written by Alex Baer

Wednesday, 25 January 2012 23:14 - Last Updated Wednesday, 25 January 2012 23:14

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The Presidential Testicles, long thought missing, may have been discovered, and in place, according to witnesses Tuesday. Confirmation is expected to occur, slowly and painfully, based on observations made by interested parties scattered around the country, in the final 360 days, the home stretch, of his initial term in office.

It's like we are all checking out the Times Square Ball Drop, on teevee, on New Year's Eve -- its only that the broadcast was delayed until now, due to technical difficulties of some sort or another.

It is to be sorely hoped that the initial reports are true, that the Presidential Balls have dropped -- and not that our president will drop any balls.

We can all hope, out here in TeeVeeLand, but we are jaded, heavily-dented optimists, gatherers of trinkets, we gaudy treasure hunters.

We are not actually ticked off enough to be pirates, not yet, nobody walking the plank so far -- the Rant will have to be about the R's listed here, to be R-Rated in that way, and not be Arrrr-Rated.

I apologize.

So, here we are: In what may be the wind-down-and-winded phase of the search game of "Where's Waldo."

We can trust the most executive of the component parts, as some might say, and if actually found, will work as effectively, but in better ways, for domestic policy concerns. We all hope those anatomical metaphors won't just function with ardent zeal around wars, around death.

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Meanwhile, we can issue up a wrinkle of enthusiasm: Hallelujah.

We all have quibbles with our Presidents, as politics is the fine art of attempting to please everyone, all at once, while simultaneously pleasing no one.

(The standard array of exceptions to the Voter's Thumb Rule is hereby deployed, thereby maintaining the critical, unclogged delivery pipeline of unbridled joy, which is more money and power, to the rich -- and to the powerful and to the well-connected, and to the rich-and-powerfully-well-connected.)

But, in a breakout attempt, here, to Remain Reasonable, Rational, Realistic, and Ratiocinative -- I had to look it up, too -- here is the current R-Rated Rant:

Mr President: The campaigning is so uniformly stellar and bright, with flavorful bursts, while the leading and negotiating has been so often mixed and dull, tasting like damp hay.

We really do understand you were handed, personally, the equivalent of 16 tons of soaking wet, stirred-up, canvas-sacked pit vipers when you assumed office. We thank you for not letting the whole shebang of this country just slip into the crevasse, not just off and into the void.

We have many bones we could pick, but we'd all rather use our time watching you walk that talk, and walk that Zippo, over to the fuse on the Really big Rocket of Recovery, and light that thing.

Tuesday, in your speech, you showed increased signs of life and fight. It's been great to see, those stirrings in the last month or so, that say you might have a few more good rounds, or even truly great ones, left.

We hope you are as up for feisty, rejuvenated governance as you are feisty, rejuvenated campaigning.

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We all like it best in our movies, and in our Reality teevee, when the hero finally stands up to the bad guys - once the hero, and we, are all positive we are all talking about the same bad guys.

It looks as if you know the difference, and we heartily salute you for that awareness. Thank you, then, for leaving out the cod-pieced flight suits and tricked-out aircraft carrier banners, in the discovery that the most dangerous and vile of those bad guys might be MUCH closer to home, and are not overseas after all.

Tuesday, in your State of the Union speech, there were stirrings of -- ssshhh, not too loudly -- hope. We're trying to breathe normally, to not hyperventilate or hold our breath. We're trying to not jinx it, to not make it run away, spooked or screaming.

One excellent indicator of that hope: You did what has not been done in twelve long years, in a State of the Union address, not since January 27, 2000.

You mentioned Responsibility, and used it in a way that showed you meant what it was about, that word. Not only that, you mentioned "Responsibility" and then you went ahead and linked it up with "Reward."

This indicates a shocking departure of the usual, trudging, beat-down, and pedestrian uses of that word, "responsibility," in these annual, turkey-shoot speeches. Almost always, it is used in ways that make us feel like the speech-maker felt some random urge of, well, responsibility, to use the word, to get it out of storage, dust it off, remove the cobwebs, take it out of the barn, and give it a good spin in public.

And so, usually, we all get spun, by that spin, and pretty badly, too.

You, sir, did what had not been done since President Clinton, in 2000: You introduced the calculus of a concept of Reasonableness and Rationality, and did so Realistically, by linking Responsibility and Reward.

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In fact, looking back, at the State of the Union speeches of the last dozen years, "Responsibility" has been mentioned 45 times, by actual count: You, sir, a total of 24 times in your goes at it, including six last night, and 21 times by President Bush, the younger.

Your uses of the word have seemed to so far be accurate usages and heartfelt; your predecessor's usages have fallen, with one exception, into two camps: the chest-beating sort of artificial patriotism, and the weepy, duty-to-future-generations sort.

There was the one time, that exception, where it was said, right straight out, that he, President Bush the younger, felt an obligation, in his 2005 speech, saying, "You and I share a responsibility." He was talking at the time about "solving" the problem of Social Security once and for all.

He was speaking about, his words were speaking about, the so-called "financial problems" of that program, but everyone knew the dog-whistle-code set off by those words: We were supposed to drown it, in a vast tub, at the Norquist Memorial Hell-Thinky Spa, in the shallow end of the tub, where a surprising number of virulent Republican genes have bubbled away in the Spa's primordial soup.

It may have been the last time a president ever said, "You and I share a responsibility." That's a shame. It could have come off well, if it had been earnest.

My apologies for the drift and digression.

My main point had been, Mr. President, that I had been thinking, for a few days now, about "Responsibility." It's a old-timey word, from an old-timey world -- a world where everyone thought they actually owed something to one another, to each other --even to the nation, if that nation really deserved it.

The last time Americans thought that way, in wholesale quantities over years of time, way down

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deep, was in a previous generation, during the time of twin, brutal shearings by Reality, called The Great Depression and World War Two.

Back then, there were only the "Have-Nots." Back then, even the "Haves" were limping a bit -- just imagine that, if you can. It was shatteringly obvious to every American that, truly, we are all in it together, in this life.

It must have been uniting, empowering, incredible, and tragic, all at once, and more.

It was a different time, that zeitgeist. In fast-forwarding to today, you'll see that any remnant of that friendly animal spirit has fled, and a beast left behind instead -- one fed copiously on the protein-rich blood of Routine and Rampant greed, aged well and expensive as all hell, from the 1980s.

That beast has so morphed and grown out of control, into the hyper-greed of today, that the new rule is so often, "Me first and screw you."

That beast is now a clueless meme, a satchel of festering hurts, its mind clicked over to the "slash and burn" setting. The beast is staggering and crashing around, pumped full of the poison of Fox anti-news and Wrong-Wing propaganda.

The Dems aren't much help in taking it down or shrinking it any. They often do us no favors, falling over themselves with weak messages that shoot off in all directions, missing the key points, and failing to use the hot, pointed, fire-hardened spear tip of truth, of hard fact, as the best possible weapon, the best possible shield.

So, you see, sir -- we could use a new infusion of Vitamin R, with a chaser of hope. We hope you have started the IV drip, that it was you by the bed just then, and that you're about to top us off with the good stuff.

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How did this begin? Innocently enough, with an overheard comment this last weekend, listening to the radio show, "Ring of Fire."

Representative John Sarbanes, a Democrat, from Maryland's third district, was on. I live on the other side of the planet, just about, and did not know much about him.

He was talking about the deep and desperate need to boot big money from its poisoner's perch in our political system, and to instead get public funding of campaigns started and booming. Until this happened, our political system would be, more or less, doomed to keep repeating what we have now.

What we have now, of course, are special interests overriding that of the public's, where the One Percent ride roughshod on the Ninety-Nine Percent, sinking spurs right into the bone, then putting us up, hungry and soaked, to ride out the night.

Mr. President: In your speech, you linked concepts of a Return to Responsibility and Reward, when you said, "Think about the America within our Reach: ... An economy built to last, where hard work pays off, and Responsibility is Rewarded."

Rep. Sarbanes, on the radio, said, regarding his own campaign's attempt to court smaller contributions by the public and give big money the boot, "I don't know if we can, but we have a Responsibility to try."

Mr. President: Those're my kind of R-Rated speeches, yours and his.

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There are signs of hope peeking through the looking glass of snow, and a few scents of spring in these R-Rated thoughts. We've had a dozen years of winter, now -- it's getting to be mighty old, and it's making us all crazy at each other, making us all creaky and cranky.

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We will soon know if the groundhog will see his shadow, if we still have some more winter to go, some more bleakness to get through .

That will happen in less than a month. Experts say, the verdict on the Presidential Testicles is expected to take a little longer.