



Written by [Thomas Sowell](#) on June 19, 2012

Random Thoughts on the Passing Scene

Many people may have voted for Barack Obama in 2008 because of his charisma. But anyone familiar with the disastrous track record of charismatic political leaders around the world in the 20th century should have run for the hills when they encountered a politician with charisma.

What is scarier than any particular political policy or issue is the widespread tendency to treat political issues as personal contests in talking points — competitive skill in fencing with words — rather than as serious attempts to find out what the facts are and what the options are.



People who are wondering what to get as a graduation present this year should consider *The Passage of Power* by Robert Caro, the recently published 4th volume in his monumental biography of Lyndon Johnson. Its revelations of the cynical, fraudulent and vicious politics in Washington should counter the pious graduation speeches that young people hear about the nobility of “public service.”

The new French president, a socialist, says frankly that he does not like rich people, that “my real enemy is the world of finance,” and apparently he has plans for much higher tax rates on high incomes. Has he not noticed how easy it is for the rich to move to some other country where the tax rates are lower — or to send their money there?

For a long time, Democrats have gone to Washington to win at all costs, while too many Republicans went to Washington to compromise with Democrats. The rise of the Tea Party may change that.

Increasing numbers of people seem to have convinced themselves that they are entitled to a “fair share” of what someone else has earned. Whole nations now seem to think that they should be bailed out from the consequences of their own reckless spending by nations that lived within their means.

Those who favor huge cuts in military spending seem not to understand that our military exists not simply to win wars, but to present such overwhelming superiority to potential enemies as to prevent having to fight a war in the first place.

Some people who are belatedly seeing what Obama is really like are saying that he has changed. This is probably easier to say than admitting that you were blind to the man’s whole history before, and were taken in by his rhetoric and geniality.

Wishful thinking is not idealism. It is self-indulgence at best and self-exaltation at worst. In either case, it is usually at the expense of others. In other words, it is the opposite of idealism.

The visceral hostility of liberals against Sarah Palin is something that liberals themselves ought to be concerned about. After all, she is just someone who has a different opinion about politics and a different social background and style. What I fear the liberals most resent is their perception that she is someone who is talking back to her betters.



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When Harry Truman was President of the United States, he had a sign on his desk in the White House that said: "The buck stops here." If Barack Obama had a sign on his desk, it would say: "The buck stops with Bush."

Does anyone seriously believe that short dresses, exposing bony knees, make women look more attractive?

In most discussions of the problems of American public schools, the low intellectual quality of people who come out of our schools of education is the 800-pound gorilla that keeps getting ignored. Such teachers cannot give their students intellectual abilities that they themselves don't have.

Did we have to wait for the Solyndra and other government "investment" disasters to learn what economic nonsense political "investments" are? Reckless spending to win votes, or campaign contributions, from the recipients of government largesse is still reckless spending, regardless of what other words are used to try to dignify it — whether these words are "stimulus," "jobs," "investment" or whatever.

In liberal logic, if life is unfair then the answer is to turn more tax money over to politicians, to spend in ways that will increase their chances of getting reelected.

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