

**THE PICAYUNE**  
("It's the truth even if it didn't happen.")  
**September 2010**

"President Obama has been meeting with voters in what he calls 'backyard chats.' He's held these in real people's backyards. You know something, I think all politicians should talk to people in their backyards. Then you could take what they say and spread it on the lawn." —Jay Leno

"Obama has been now finally getting on the campaign trail trying to help [Democrats]. Their big plan is a series of what they call backyard visits where the President speaks to people in their backyards in Middle America. Because nothing calms the fears of Middle Americans like having a black man suddenly appear in your backyard." —Bill Maher

"In an effort to drum up support for Democratic candidates, President Obama has been traveling the country and engaging voters in a series of backyard chats. He was going to do front yard chats, but then you get the foreclosure sign in the pictures." —Seth Meyers

"On the 'Today' show, President Obama said he supports having a longer school year. In response, Sasha and Malia announced they support Sarah Palin." —Jimmy Fallon

"At the UN, President Obama called on other countries to help us track down and eliminate radicals and extremists. But they told Obama, 'Hey, the Tea Party is your problem, buddy.'" —Jay Leno

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Bob Woodward has written a book which states that the White House agonized over the decision to leave Iraq. Too bad no one agonized over the decision to go into Iraq." —David Letterman

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"Christine O'Donnell was caught lying about her educational background. She may not believe in pleasuring herself, but she thought her resume needed massaging." —Craig Ferguson, on O'Donnell claiming she attended Oxford University

"Today we found out that a third college Christine O'Donnell said she attended has no record of ever knowing her. I'm starting to wonder if she ever really went to Hogwarts." —Bill Maher

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"Meg Whitman, our own candidate for governor of California, is running on a platform that's as tough as nails on illegal immigration. We found out this week she had an illegal immigrant working in her house for nine years. Today Meg Whitman said she's willing to take a lie detector test to prove that she didn't know that she had an illegal alien cleaning her house. You know what, if we wanted a governor who swears they have no idea what's happening in their house, we'd move to Alaska." —Bill Maher

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"Every person I know who's lost an eye immediately thinks, 'I should think about getting a camera'," claims Canadian filmmaker Rob Spence. But Spence, 36, actually did it. He damaged his right eye as a child, and doctors finally suggested it be removed. He first checked with bionics researchers in Australia, but instead used local engineers, who developed a camera, transmitter, and power source that fit into a prosthetic eye he can pop into his socket. "The aesthetic, oddly, is very similar to the point of view of the Terminator from the first Terminator film, including a slight wavering of video," he says. Spence, also known as "Eyeborg", admits "the two words that always come up when I meet people are 'fascinating' and 'creepy'." He's in the process of making a documentary with his eyecam, and attended the Other Film Festival in Melbourne, Vic., Australia, to show the first footage. (Sydney Morning Herald) ...Critics described the result as "eye-popping". --This Is True

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Florence - August 15, 2010 - A fierce fight has erupted over the ownership of Michelangelo's David between the Italian state and Florence, the city where the masterpiece is on display.

A symbol of the Florentine Republic's defiance of its enemies, including Rome, when erected in 1504 at the entrance to Palazzo Vecchio, the town hall, Michelangelo's portrayal of the slayer of Goliath has remained a mascot for proud locals long after the unification of Italy.

But after delving into centuries-old archives, two lawyers commissioned by the government of Berlusconi have produced what they call conclusive evidence that the renaissance masterpiece belongs not to Florence, but to the Italian state.

In a country where local loyalties often triumph over national pride, the reaction in Florence was fast and furious, starting with the mayor. "With all due respect to Roman lawyers," said Matteo Renzi, "the unquestioned documents in the possession of the city and the state are clear: David belongs to Florence."

In a nine-page document, the legal team from Rome argues that the state of Italy, not the city of Florence, is the legal successor to the Florentine Republic, which funded the purchase of the sinuous, sling-bearing David that Michelangelo daringly carved from an awkwardly sized block of Carrara marble that had lain unused in Florence for decades.

Claiming that the lawyers in Rome had "nothing better to do in August" than seize statues, Renzi cited his own historical research. "When Rome became the capital of Italy, a decree in 1870-1

assigned Palazzo Vecchio and all it contained to Florence, including David," he said. "David is ours, that is what the documents state."

Not according to the lawyers, who note that the paperwork related to the handover of the palazzo makes no mention of David "even though by this time it had acquired an enormous symbolic value". Additionally, when David was put on display at Florence's Accademia gallery in 1873, the city asserted no rights to the sculpture. A year later, the report adds, the then mayor of Florence even claimed David belonged to the Italian government when he billed Rome for the cost of moving it.

Renzi, a rising star of the Italian center-left said he was unswayed and would demand a face-to-face meeting with culture minister, Sandro Bondi, a published poet who has dedicated some of his work to Silvio Berlusconi.

After surviving an attack in 1991 from a hammer-wielding visitor who damaged toes, before it benefited from restoration work in 2003, David is today worth 8M Euro (\$10M USD) in annual ticket sales, which to Renzi's irritation is pocketed by the government, along with revenue from other Florence museums including the Uffizi Gallery, for a total of 30M Euro according to a local daily newspaper. The government has meanwhile failed to make good on repeated promises to provide special funding to protect Florence's heritage, the mayor claimed.

Earlier this month, Renzi said he would bill Rome for the scrubbing off of graffiti left by bored tourists waiting in the long queues to see Florence's collection of renaissance marvels. "The state takes the money from the visits to the Uffizi and to see David but does not clean up. The city is entitled to be cleaned," he said.

*Hey Florence, Rome... "Andate tutti a 'fanculo!"*

*What a stupid, trivial and boring issue. Florence must have instigated the fight by reminding Rome that David symbolizes the defense of civil liberties that was integrated in the Florentine Republic which once flourished...and that set those mutton heads off.*

*You know, it's not as if David is going to be taken away and moved into some politician's home (although the idea must have crossed the mind of some dolt in Parliament whose head is as solid as David's). We're more than sure the fight is political in nature due to the incredible amount of free time our politicians have on their hands. After all, running an Italian government office must be easier than a sheep herder trying to intercept a herd of 217 sheep before it invades his next door neighbor's vegetable crop.*

*We sincerely hope they'll leave David to the enjoyment of Italy's tourists and get to more difficult issues like how to get the most juice out of fresh lemons. --Only In Italy*

"Albino Python on Cocaine Confronts Police" -- AFP headline

Prison inmates in British Columbia, Canada, are allowed a limited amount of personal properties in their cells, but educational textbooks don't count toward the limit. So when inmate Ken MacKay was denied a thesaurus on the grounds it was not educational, he filed suit. A federal judge has ruled against the prison. "Why was the thesaurus not considered an educational textbook?" Judge Sean Harrington wrote in his decision. "Without doubt it is educational. In my opinion, the decision was unreasonable." (Canadian Press) ...It took a couple of weeks, but MacKay declared the judge's ruling was significant, important, meaningful, substantial, seminal, ground-breaking, precedent-setting.... --This Is True

"Woman Convicted of Sperm Donation Fraud" -- WAVY-TV (Norfolk, Va.) headline

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It's the truth even if it did happen:

"America's Empire and Endless Wars Are Destroying the World, and Ruining Our Great Country"

*For more than 50 years, Washington has subscribed to the absurd notion that America can police the world with military action. All we've managed to do is bankrupt our country. -- AlterNet headline*

"Hightower: If You Don't Fight for the Middle Class, Kiss It Good-Bye"

*America's corporate chieftains must love poor people, for they're doing all they can to create millions more of them. Let's put a stop to this.*

America's corporate chieftains must love poor people, for they're doing all they can to create millions more of them.

They're knocking down wages, offshoring everything from manufacturing jobs to high tech, reducing full-time work to part-time, downsizing our workplaces, busting unions, cutting health care coverage and canceling pensions -- while also lobbying in Washington to privatize Social Security, eliminate job safety protections, restrict unemployment benefits, kill job-creating programs and increase corporate control of our elections.

It's said that the poor and the rich will always be among us. But nowhere is it written that the middle-class will always be there. In fact, it is a very recent creation in our society (and an unavailable dream for most people in the world). America's great middle class literally arose with the rise of labor unions and populist political movements in the 1800s, finally culminating in democratic economic reforms implemented from the 1930s into the 1960s.

Social Security, wage AND hour laws, collective bargaining rights, unemployment compensation, the GI Bill, the interstate highway program, civil rights laws, Medicare, Head Start -- and more -- provided the national framework necessary to sustain a middle class for the American Majority.

This essential framework was not "given" to us by corporate executives and politicians -- indeed, they sputtered, spewed and fought every piece of it tooth and nail. Rather, it came from union-led grassroots movements, organizing for structural change.

This Labor Day, we see corporate executives and their politicians relentlessly dismantling that framework, piece by piece -- and we see the middle class disappearing and poverty rising with each dismantled piece. But as labor icon Joe Hill said just before he was executed by Utah authorities for his unionizing activities, "Don't mourn, organize." It's time for working families to organize again for the revitalization of the middle class. --AlterNet



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