

## INTRODUCTION

First up: Call me clairvoyant, but I know what you're thinking. *Another book from O'Reilly? We have to read yet another book from this guy?* Let me quickly say that this book is not mandatory. This is not something completely different like my works of history. No, *Keep It Pithy* is a literary highlight reel that may help you in your life. I really hope it does.

Over the past twenty years, I have written millions of words. “Blovitating” doesn't even begin to cover it. Eleven bestsellers, thousands of newspaper columns, a daily talking points memo on television, and so on. On my tombstone I want these words inscribed: “He finally stopped talking.”

Many publishers have asked me to simply reprint my past stuff. I've always said no. That's because some of what I've written is obsolete. Dated. Not relevant to anything anymore. That happens because life passes quickly and seasons change, to say the least. What was fascinating five years ago may be very boring right now.

But some of what I've put down on paper is worth another look, especially my predictions about the age of Barack Obama. Back when I wrote the book *Culture Warrior*, I knew little about the

man. And what I wrote in *Culture Warrior* had nothing to do with him as a human being. But it did have to do with his mind-set and how his secular-progressive (S-P) point of view was gaining steam in America. Looking back, I see that I am nearly an oracle in this area. It's interesting to read today what I saw in the fictional future that I created years ago. It's also somewhat frightening.

In this book we look back but we also update everything, allowing you to incorporate some of the views I've stated into your own lives should you choose to do that. The only way things will get better in America is for sane people to win the debate. *Keep It Pithy* will help you do that, and it will also clarify things that may be perplexing you at this moment. As usual, I will be blunt and, I hope, entertaining at the same time.

It is especially important for younger Americans to understand what the deuce is happening in their country and how to deal with it so that they can prosper and help America at the same time. Fortunately, I think I have accomplished that in my own life, and I want to impart some guidance so that you can do the same thing. The opening headline is obvious: *Keep it pithy!* We'll tell you exactly why in the pages of this book.

It continues to amaze me that so many of you want to hear and read what I have to say. It's really the ultimate compliment, and I take your interest very seriously. I would never want to let you down in any way. I owe you honesty, clarity, and my best work. I think this book will reflect that. Please let me know by email if it does not.

Finally, I owe a big thanks to my pal Charles Flowers, who has helped me compile the book. You may have seen the name. Flowers has worked with me from the beginning of my literary career

and coauthored the book *Kids Are Americans, Too*. Charles is an interesting story. A southerner with a liberal sensibility about life, he is an educator and a man of letters. He and I are about as opposite as two Americans can get. But we both share a passion for the traditions of the country and for problem solving. And I think over the years I have somewhat convinced Charles that the no spin, pithy approach to disseminating information is the way to go. He can't admit that to his salon-type friends because they'd stone him. However, Charles has reaped other rewards among my fans. They love him at Peppino's, one of the best Italian restaurants on the planet.

In this book, Charles and I have selected some of my best stuff and have presented it in a way that is designed to help your life. It is another journey that we hope you will enjoy. And one final thing: Please keep in mind that in order to move forward, you have to look backward. We all must understand what has happened in our lives, in the country, and in society in order not to repeat mistakes and, most important, so that we can find the most moral path to happiness and prosperity.

Life is short. No time to waste. Here now—the pith!



# *State of the Union*



**JUST AS I PREDICTED AND LONG BEFORE  
WE HEARD OF PRESIDENT OBAMA**

*The Growing Success of the Progressive Agenda*

Back in 2006, I had fun imagining in my book *Culture Warrior* a future State of the Union speech by a U.S. president named Gloria Hernandez. Here's a summary of that imaginary pol's goals and philosophies:

A sharing of the wealth by targeting the affluent for most of the government's revenue . . . lax school discipline on American children to promote their so-called liberties . . . naked hostility to religious values and their expression in public . . . a "one-world" approach to foreign relations that would prevent the U.S. government from imposing a policy that would benefit America first . . . a touchy-feely vision of our society that places individual self-expression and rights over self-sacrifice and adult responsibility.

Did I get it right? Well, I made one serious mistake. I imagined that this would be the platform of a president elected in 2020. Looked at a calendar lately?

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The brilliant men who forged the Constitution understood that Americans should have the opportunity to pursue happiness without much government interference. They also believed for both moral and practical reasons that the greater good must always take precedence over individual selfishness.





The S-P notion that the U.S. government has the right to seize private property (which is exactly what the estate tax achieves, for example, but under stealth wording), or redistribute legally earned income from the affluent to the poor, runs counter to the founding spirit of America in every way.

Look at the evidence. The United States became the strongest nation on earth because individuals working their butts off created a unified powerhouse.

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Right now our national slogan is “The more you make, the more we take. And we’re not even going to watch how we spend it.”

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Throwing our tax dollars away has become the new national pastime, replacing baseball!

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Usually, as I’ve noted in the introduction, I’m not likely to disagree all that much with what I’ve opined in the past. Exceptions are notable, and I will note them. Most of these quotes from my writings will require no explanation. My core values have not fundamentally changed.

Too late now!

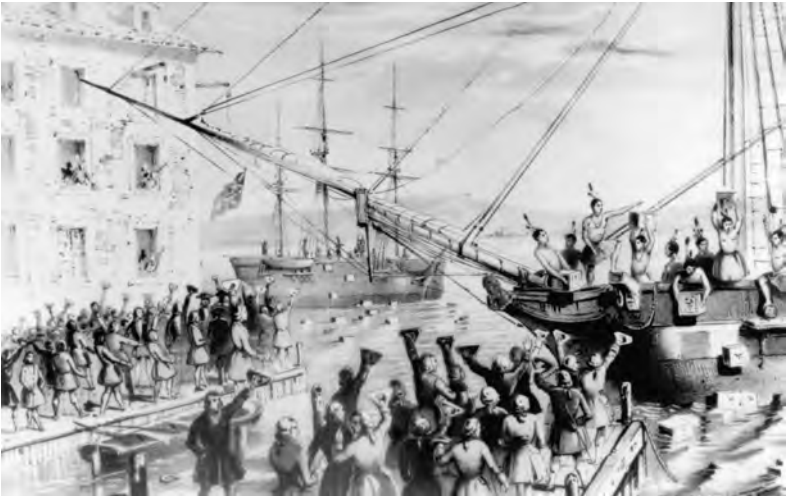
**In fact . . .**

Politicians will argue—as many have on my program—that the government needs your money. This is a lie. There is more than enough tax revenue available today to pay for the armed forces, roads, police, and other vital services without looting the take-home pay of working Americans. No, the reason our taxes are so punitive is right there in front of you: obvious and arrogant wastefulness in government-run programs. Forget the \$400 toilet seats in the Pentagon budget—peanuts. The real killing waste is in programs that do not work.

**(I then noted the “horrific failure” of Clinton’s \$30 billion drug war and the \$200 billion his administration threw at public education, to no great effect.)**

I could give you hundreds of examples of ridiculous government waste, but that would take a whole other book. Right now, I have enough on my hands trying to write this one. But you can trust me on this: The tax situation in this country is brutal, including the fact that your elected representatives and their opponents are using entitlements to buy votes. That includes Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. Listen very carefully when pols talk about these hot-button programs. Are they making sense, or are they pandering?

You have to decide. The bottom line is that few government programs are run effectively or with discipline. What we call “waste” or “pork” is *reelection insurance* to our leaders. Besides, the prevailing wisdom is that there will always be more tax money coming in, so don’t sweat it. Is it time for another tea party like the one given in honor of King George III in Boston Harbor? I’ll meet you at the water’s edge. . . .



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Welfare has failed. Public housing is a shambles. Public education is a mess. The poverty rate remains almost unchanged. And yet the Big Government Beat goes on.

In 1766 Benjamin Franklin warned the British Parliament that if the stamp tax wasn’t repealed, the colonies might well

revolt. Today our tax situation is revolting (sorry), but too many of us remain passive in the face of it. The road to hell is paved with good intentions—and you know what? Those intentions are being paid for big-time by all working Americans. It is enough to test even the strongest person's sobriety.

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**I don't expect any help from the Fifth Estate.**

The sad truth is that most high-profile media people are looking out for themselves and themselves alone. On any given day in Manhattan, you will see them dining in incredibly expensive restaurants with other powerful people. You will see them at swanky parties and black-tie charity events. You will see them at their lavish vacation homes in the Hamptons, Aspen, or Loudoun County, Virginia. You will not see them at Wal-Mart.

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The split between “we” the people and the media is especially severe in the spiritual arena. A survey by the American Society of Newspaper Editors shows that the rate of atheism among journalists is about 20 percent, significantly higher than among the general population, where it stands at about 9 percent. When one in five media warriors does not believe in the existence of a supreme being, it's not hard to figure out why many press people support secular causes

like unrestricted abortion, gay marriage, and restraints on public displays of faith.

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Hard work and discipline lead to economic success. Government handouts and unsupervised policies of pity only rob people of incentive. If tax money continues to be wasted, it becomes morally wrong for our government to confiscate huge percentages of income and property from Americans, even if they are wealthy.

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Until the mid-1930s, America was a nation that basically said to its citizens: “Your forefathers have given you freedom, so good luck, see you around, hope you make it.” Then came the Great Depression, World War II, the Great Society, the Age of Aquarius, the Me Generation, and finally the anything-goes Clinton years. Throughout those generations everything changed. While John Kennedy once asked what you would do for your country, modern politicians were suddenly lining up to tell you what they were going to give you, and one of the biggest entitlement pushers around was JFK’s brother Senator Edward Kennedy. Most giveaway programs have been complete failures, but the rhetorical battle continues to this day.

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To this day, I keep these lessons close:

1. Work hard.
  2. Keep a clear head. [That means avoid getting hammered as much as possible.]
  3. Don't compromise when you know you're right.
  4. Give most people the benefit of the doubt.
  5. Don't fear authority.
  6. And definitely have a good time.
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Chances are you're not wealthy.

Because in America very few people are. That's the deal. The average annual pay in America is about \$43,000 for an individual, about \$63,000 for a household. And the celebrated or maligned "1 percent"? In 2012, \$343,927 a year would put you in that group. So . . .

If you don't believe class is important in your life, you might want to ask yourselves some questions like these:

- Did my spouse or I turn down a chance for another job because of the fear of "not fitting in"?
- Did someone in my family not stand up for himself or a family member after some injustice because he didn't feel he was good enough?
- Do I miss out on some social or sports activity I like because I'm afraid everyone else involved in it dresses better or has more income?

- Have I discouraged my children from chasing an ambitious goal because I'm afraid they won't be happy or comfortable in an upper-class situation?
- Do I refuse to learn something—Alpine skiing, computer skills, wine collecting, field hockey—because I think that other people are already way ahead of me and I would be acting “above my station”?

**The class situation has not improved over the years.**

**Don't expect it to change in our lifetimes.**

**Live with it and make your own way.**

**Even people of modest means can have class.**



I'm reminded of conservative humorist P. J. O'Rourke's definition of the three branches of government: not the legislature, executive, and judicial system we learned about in school, but “money, television, and B.S.”



**If I'm right about secular-progressivism in this country (and I am!), we shouldn't just roll over and submit. . . .**

We have the right to vote. People have died to protect that right. But half or more of us stay home during important elections. When we talk to pollsters, we reveal amazing

ignorance about the issues, the candidates, and even the structure of government.

Who represents you in Congress? And is he or she a Democrat or Republican? What's his or her stand on abortion, gun control, trade with Communist China, taxes . . . ? You'd be surprised at how many Americans haven't a clue to the answers to questions like these. And if you're surprised, I'm amazed. These people make the laws that define our lives, and they decide how to spend the money collected by a confiscatory tax system.

**Clue: Were tax hikes an issue in the last national election?**

**Another clue: Did the election results affect the decisions made to avert the so-called fiscal cliff?**

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Crazed ideologues on the right who laugh off environmental concerns are just as stupid as crazed ideologues on the left who have somehow determined that human life in the womb is expendable.

Just as with global warming, no one knows exactly when life begins. Only the deity knows. You can *believe* anything you want, but you DON'T KNOW. We do know one thing, however: Scientists have proven that upon conception, human DNA is present. Get it? The fetus already has the codes in place from its biological mother and father. So the "mass of nonhuman cells" argument goes right out the window if you're an honest person.



In my opinion, the “compassionate” liberal cadre that supports abortion on demand—for any reason at any time—is guilty of gross human-rights violations. Worshiping at the altar of “reproductive rights” is wrong. Abortion should be rare, regulated, and discouraged. Human dignity demands it.

So you can see that the bold, fresh guy has some problems with both sides of the ideological spectrum. But unlike Judy Collins, who sang about not knowing life at all, I am more confident in my views. Independent thought based upon greater good, realism, and, yes, compassion drives my agenda and dictates my analysis.



### **More on taxes in today’s political climate . . .**

Politicians take your tax dollars and give them to their friends and patrons. How corrupt is that? Well, they get away with it because politicians know that you won’t notice that you’re being stiffed as long as the malls stay open late and your cable system provides twenty-four-hour sports coverage.

In other words, the political climate in the USA has changed in favor of the crooks and incompetents. How can you guarantee yourself a future in public service? Be willing to sell out for campaign money. And if you’re an especially talented liar, you can go very far. Both major parties would be happy to have you join the hustle. (But get in line quick.

It's only the first few who will be allowed on board. Any more than that, and the bandits get nervous.)

Am I being too harsh?

**Simple answer to that: no.**



**But there are, and have been, exceptions.**

The politician I most admire is Abraham Lincoln. The reason is simple: He was kind. He showed his concern for everyday Americans while trying to lead this country through its greatest crisis so far. Failure to act wisely and courageously at the height of the Civil War would have destroyed the nation, which was founded at such risk barely a hundred years before.

Even so, Lincoln devoted one day a week to reading mail from the people and answering with notes on the reverse side of the page. Not surprisingly, many letters were written to seek jobs or other favors. The president often tried to help these ordinary people, even though they were strangers to the corridors of power and influence. . . .

I have seen a number of these letters from mothers who wanted to visit their wounded sons, from older men who needed work to support their families after all the young relatives had gone to war, and from children worried about their fathers in uniform. Lincoln's replies are amazingly compassionate. He reveals himself as a great man who used determination and humility to save the Union. Neither vain nor vengeful, he had no spin guys or bagmen and took no money. Because he loved his country, he suffered greatly at the loss of life on both sides of the conflict. Despite the tremendous personal stress and the nationwide chaos, Lincoln still helped individuals while working to keep the country whole.

Where are today's Honest Abes?

Dunno, but we should keep an eye out. Might happen again.

The above sketch was written years before I wrote my recent bestseller, *Killing Lincoln*. Good in the world is too often matched by evil, as in the person of the assassin John Wilkes Booth.

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Am I serious about that observation?

Yes.

Evil is a constant presence throughout the world. I've seen soldiers gun down unarmed civilians in Latin America, Irish terrorists kill and maim their fellow citizens in Belfast with

bombs, and heroin addicts with AIDS knowingly share needles with other addicts without telling them about the infection. Evil.

Once, I stood in the cellar of an abandoned Italian church that had been used by Satanists in rituals that included murder. The feeling of evil permeated this room. I had never felt anything like it.

But then I felt it again in Africa at Victoria Falls in Zambia. I stood where human sacrifice was practiced years before by tribes native to the area. Victims were tossed off the cliff into the thundering falls. I got out of there quick.

So I know that true, unrepentant evil exists. And I firmly believe it will be punished, just as good will be rewarded. That is part of the order of the universe, if we only take the time to recognize it.