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Don't be fooled by the Newt-Mitt-Rick show

By Sam Webb

istening to the exchanges among the main Republican presidential candidates, it is easy to think that the debates are a television "reality show."

Newt attacks Mitt for his role at the private equity firm Bain Capital. Mitt assails Newt for his ties to Fannie Mae and his dismal performance as speaker of the House in the 1990s. And Rick Santorum when he gets a word in edgewise claims that neither Romney nor Gingrich is the real deal, that is, a true conservative. That tag belongs to him, he says - only he has a franchise on it.

Oops! I almost failed to mention Ron Paul, who is no better than the frontrunners, but he is more of a footnote in the primary contests at this point.

But there is more to these debates than political theater, more than attack and counterattack. What is striking, but goes unnoticed in this clashing free-for-all, is the similarity in basic policy positions of the leading Republican presidential hopefuls.

When it comes to rapid and broad expansion of domestic oil and gas exploration regardless of environmental damage, they are for it.

When it comes to deregulation and discredited "free market solutions," they want it.

When it comes to broad-scale privatization of



education, they support it.

When it comes to tax breaks for the wealthiest, they can't get enough of it .

When it comes to repeal of Roe v. Wade and with it women's reproductive rights, they are chomping at the bit to do it.

When it comes to aggressive projection of military power in the Middle East and elsewhere, they strongly advocate it.

When it comes to stacking the courts with right-wing judges, they champion it.

When it comes to the elimination of racial

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and gender inequality, they want none of it.

When it comes to drastic slashing of the federal budget, they are all for it.

If any one of them is elected, they will set out to complete and consolidate the counterrevolution that Ronald Reagan initiated.

When it comes to overturning the Obama health care act, they salivate over it.

When it comes to disempowering people's organizations, they are determined to do it.

When it comes to climate change, they deny it.

And when it comes to economic relief ... on jobs, foreclosures and food insecurity ... they do nothing about it.

In other words, even though they trade charges and counter-charges (usually true), Romney, Gingrich and Santorum (and Ron Paul too with a few variations) are of like mind. They are on the same page.

If any one of them is elected and if the Republicans gain control of Congress, they will set out to complete and consolidate the counterrevolution that Ronald Reagan initiated.

Reagan began this counterrevolution three decades ago. Its aim was to employ the state to shift the balance of political forces to the side of the most reactionary sections of the capitalist class.

Everything that was won by an aroused people over the course of the 20th century was to be eliminated hook, line and sinker. Nothing of the edifice of rights and social gains was to be left standing. The people were to be rendered impoverished as well as defenseless against the monster of a corporate-controlled market and state.

Beneath the discordant sounds of the current Republican Party debates lies a shared vision that would throw the country back to the Gilded Age when corporate elites did as they pleased and the people had no rights that corporate capital had to respect.

Some suggest that there is no difference in vision between President Obama on the one hand and Romney, Gingrich and Santorum on the other. But this is not only wrongheaded, but also politically dangerous.

Only yesterday I read an article by Chris Hedges that goes in that direction.

It sounded militant and righteous, but if taken seriously it's a fool's errand and will isolate the left from the broad currents of American politics this year. And nobody who cares about social progress should want to do that.

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Sam Webb is chair of the Communist Party USA.

GOP prez candidates help selves on taxes

By PW Editorial Board

he Republican presidential candidates made it clear in the latest installment of their long string of debates why they have been resisting the releasing of their tax statements.

Romney finally released one year's worth of returns - his 2010 document.

He has a lot of offshore tax shelters. He paid less than 13.9 percent of his income in taxes during the year 2010. He has undisclosed amounts of funds hidden in the Cayman Islands and other overseas locations. Since the amounts are undisclosed it can be assumed the sums stashed in those shelters could be quite large. Workers can't pay the low tax rates Romney pays because they don't earn money from capital gains and they don't have overseas tax shelters.

The only reasonable conclusion that can be drawn from his one year release is that for most of the other years about which he released no information he probably paid even less or perhaps even nothing in taxes.

All these problems haven't stopped Romney from proposing a tax plan that would actually cut what little taxes he did pay in half.

The Gingrich plan calls for the elimination of all taxes on capital gains and the institution of a

flat rate 15 percent tax for everyone.

Gingrich avoided tens of thousands in Medicare payroll taxes by classifying most of his income as profits and dividends.

Then, after Romney accused Gingrich of influence peddling and demanded he release documents regarding his work for Freddie Mac, Newt Gingrich released a "contract" that the New York Times described as "legal boilerplate" and that contains no details about the advice he gave or ways in which he made use of his political contacts to benefit the people paying him.

Despite his absurd insistence that he was never a lobbyist, the contract showed that Gingrich was hired by the division of Freddie Mac responsible for lobbying.

Romney's sanctimonious attacks on Gingrich about this matter were also quite disgusting. Romney's own investments in Freddie Mac have netted him tens of thousands of dollars.

President Obama called for fairness in taxation. As he has in the past, he is expected to insist that the wealthy in this nation pay their fair share of taxes. The Republican presidential hopefuls are swimming against the tide.

Hopefully, it will be only a matter of time before they sink.

President Obama called for fairness in taxation.



Obama to investigate mortgage fraud

By Joe Sims

esponding to public demands to prosecute the banks responsible for creating the financial crisis by speculating in sub-prime mortgages, President Obama announced on Tuesday a new financial irregularities task force. The new unit was announced in the State of the Union address.

The task force will be headed by New York's attorney general Eric Schneiderman. Schneiderman, along with the attorney general in California and other states, has been critical of efforts by the Department of Justice to rush negotiations for a settlement with the big banks responsible before possible criminal activity has been adequately investigated.

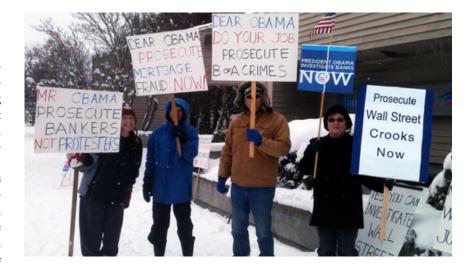
California, one of the states with the largest number of foreclosed homes, had withdrawn from the talks.

Schneiderman promised to move ahead quickly. "There have been investigations going on in various states and branches of the federal government," he said. "We're now making a concerted effort to pull everything together and move forward aggressively to address these issues."

According to the Los Angeles Times, the new investigation will be separate from the Department of Justice's effort to make a deal with the banks. "The multistate talks all relate to post-crash conduct. These are abuses in the foreclosure process," he said. "Our working group is focusing on the conduct related to the pooling and creation of mortgage-backed securities...the conduct that created the crash, not the abuses that happened after the fact."

Prior to the president's announcement, colorofchange.org and other civil rights and progressive groups had initiated a signature campaign demanding that the banks be investigated. More than 360,000 signatures were delivered in the recent period to the Obama administration.

In addition, on Monday Democratic lawyers joined Sen. Sherrod Brown, D, Ohio, in his criti-



cism of the size of the settlement federal regulators have been proposing to the Attorneys General. Brown, describing the deal to the Washington Post, said, "We're talking about not much more than a slap on the wrist."

While the settlement seems to be in the range of \$25 billion, making it one of the largest such cases on record, housing advocates and other groups are calling for much more. Van Jones and George Goehl, in a recent op-ed, called for a minimum of \$300 billion. They write, "The banks must pay a minimum \$300 billion in principal reduction for homeowners with underwater mortgages and/or restitution for foreclosed-on families. This is essential. Every effort to reboot the housing market has failed because it has not done the most essential thing: actually reduce the massive debt load carried by homeowners."

Mortgage companies reaped hundreds of billions in profits both prior to and after the financial crisis. Over 8 million families have lost their homes since the start of the housing meltdown.

Black and Latino homeowners were singled out by the bank's predatory lending practices, resulting in the biggest wealth loss in these communities in U.S. history.

Unlike the savings and loan scam of the 1990s, to date no one has been criminally prosecuted for fraud. Unlike the savings and loan scam of the 1990s, to date no one has been criminally prosecuted for fraud.

LOCAL NEWS

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Tucson bans Mexican-American studies

By Blake Deppe

fter the Tucson, Ariz. school district banned its acclaimed Mexican-American studies program, hundreds of high school students throughout the city walked out of their schools in protest.

The protesters gathered downtown at the administrative offices of the Tucson Unified School District. The administrators targeted were at least partially responsible for the ban.

Demonstrators were angered by what they see as the immorality and unfairness of a decision to confiscate, in front of students, books that reflect the heritage of the students themselves. (60 percent of the students in the Tucson district come from Mexican-American backgrounds.)

The ban follows by only a week an incident involving a school superintendent (who comes from Texas) who told students that if they wanted to study their own history, they should "go to Mexico."

Although the district is partially to blame for doing away with the Mexican studies program and shuffling teens into other classes, a report in the New York Times indicates that, had it failed to shut down the program, it would have lost over \$14 million in state funding.

This proved to be the desired outcome for Republican Arizona school superintendent John Huppenthal, a tea party activist who has long crusaded against ethnic studies. Huppenthal went as far as to claim that they are "brainwashing" students into "thinking that the Latino community is a victim of white oppression."

Tucson school officials argued that Huppenthal misunderstood and misinterpreted the program, and that Mexican-American studies was meant to engage students, push them to do well, and achieve better grades and class attendance.

México aún en el asidero de la guerra de la droga

Por Prensa Latina

inco años después que el Presidente Felipe Calderón enviara soldados a través de ciudades y pueblos para desmantelar a los cárteles de la droga, Calderón está aún lejos del logro de su meta. En su lugar, parece que el gobierno mexicano ha perdido el control de la situación y vuelto al país en un campo de batalla.

No pasa día sin que las cadenas de noticias y periódicos del país mencionen las últimas víctimas, muertes y combates. Todos los días son hallados cuerpos, frecuentemente con signos de tortura. Los cárteles de la droga están librando una brutal guerra contra las fuerzas de seguridad del gobierno y los cárteles rivales para controlar las exportaciones lucrativas de droga hacia los Estados Unidos. Los cárteles hacen entre \$18-\$39 billones en ganancias por la droga cada año, de acuerdo a estimaciones oficiales.

Algunos de los cárteles están involucrados en tráfico de mujeres y hacen tanto lucro de esto como de la venta de drogas, de acuerdo al Consejo situado en Estados Unidos sobre Asuntos Hemisféricos. Normalmente ellos secuestran o chantajean a jóvenes mujeres mexicanas, forzándolas a trabajar en burdeles mexicanos o de Estados Unidos o en clubes de desnudismo.

Una de las tácticas favoritas usadas por los cárteles es abandonar cuerpos decapitados o partes corporales cortadas como cabezas o brazos en espacios públicos para aterrorizar a las fuerzas de seguridad, a los rivales y al público. Ha habido reportes en curso de tumbas masivas que han sido descubiertas por todo México.

Los soldados mexicanos frecuentemente cubren sus caras para esconder sus identidades durante las operaciones, temerosos de que "narcos" descubrirán sus nombres y enviarán pistoleros para matar a sus familias. Hace dos años, los nombres de dos soldados que murieron en un tiroteo con líderes narcos en Guadalajara fueron revelados por los medios noticiosos. Al día siguiente pistoleros aparecieron en los peldaños de los hogares de las familias de los soldados fallecidos y asesinaron a la mayoría de los miembros de sus familias.

Estimaciones de los números de muertos se extienden desde 50, 000 hasta 67, 000 en los cinco años pasados.

Hasta ahora, las fuerzas armadas, mientras matan o arrestan a muchas figuras clave pertenecientes a los cinco principales cárteles del país, han sido incapaces de destruir a las principales organizaciones narco de México.

Algunos críticos también acusan al gobierno de Calderón de tener lazos con algunos de los cárteles.

El único lugar seguro en el país donde no hay enfrentamientos es el Distrito Federal, un largo estado que envuelve a la Ciudad de México. El cártel y los líderes gubernamentales, que viven en el D.F. y no quieren una guerra sangrienta en su traspatio, parecen haber llamado a tregua.

Defensores de los derechos humanos también acusan que las fuerzas de seguridad, en el proceso de enfrentamiento con los cárteles, han cometido abusos contra los derechos humanos de la población civil así como también de activistas de los derechos humanos.

El gobierno de Calderón sabe lo que están haciendo los militares pero se hace el ciego.

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