

# To Shill for Trump Is to Lose His Respect

Back in 2012, shortly after President Obama secured a second term in the White House, I [wrote a column](#) in which I posed the below question to Americans:



*If our president can do so many things wrong in his first term, fail miserably to achieve every predicted outcome he put forth at the beginning of his presidency, show no interest in addressing the biggest threats to our nation, and still be rewarded with re-election, how can he possibly respect us?*

It was a not-so-veiled reference to a famous quote often attributed to legendary comedian Groucho Marx: “I wouldn’t want to belong to any club that would have me as a member.”

The point, of course, is that if a group can bring itself to hold such a grossly unworthy individual in high regard, that group is not worthy of the individual’s respect. I suspected (and still believe) that President Obama felt this way about the country after he won re-election, and I think that both of the major parties’ 2016 presidential candidates probably feel the same way about their devout supporters.

For example, Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton have established themselves as perhaps the two most unmistakably dishonest presidential candidates ever to win their parties’ nominations. Yet, each has a band of loyal followers that are always ready and willing to excoriate the other side’s candidate for – you guessed it – *lying*.

How anyone with any sense of shame can participate in such a glaringly hypocritical effort is beyond me, but there is no shortage of such people. And while each of the candidates undoubtedly appreciates the benefits of those willing to disgrace themselves in the name of their campaign, neither could possibly find a way to respect them.

The only real difference I see between the presumptive nominees, in this sense, is that Trump routinely goes out of his way to publicly *express* that disrespect.

I'm not only talking about what little regard he has for his common faithful, who he claims (probably accurately) would vote for him even if he [shot someone in the middle of a street](#). I'm also referring to the public figures out there who've spent an enormous amount of their political and professional capital to substantiate Trump as a serious, credible candidate.

One of those people is former Texas Governor, Rick Perry. As many will remember, Perry was the first GOP presidential candidate to leave the primary race last year. Not long before his exit, he delivered to his party a dire warning of the dangers of a Trump nomination. He called Trump a "barking carnival act" and a "cancer on conservatism." In his departure speech, Perry said that "the conservative movement has always been about principles, not personalities," and that the Republican nominee "should embody those principles" and "must make the case for the cause of conservatism more than the cause of their own celebrity."

Those words were why so many conservatives were shocked eight months later, when Perry declared his enthusiastic support for Trump, and even began floating his own name as a possible VP pick. Perry then even went as far as to knock the #NeverTrump crowd, telling a cable news host, "Can you believe those renegades who refuse to support Trump?"

Perry *had* to know that his principled stance against Trump helped inspire many of the conservatives who later vowed not to support Trump in the primary and in the general election. So for him to hop aboard the *Trump Train* was a big political gain for Trump.

How did Trump reward Perry for his unlikely support? By publicly mocking him.

“This politics is a dirty business,” Trump [told campaign rally attendees](#), after reminding them of the negative things Perry had said about him months earlier. “I have to tell you, I have never seen people able to pivot like politicians.”

Plainly put, to shill for Trump is to lose his respect.

One of the most incredible stories of the 2016 election cycle (which I’ve written about in several columns) has been rise of the “Alternative Right” (more commonly known as the “alt right”) in the conservative media. A number of right-wing commentators on cable news, talk radio, and Internet blogs, who had long demanded ideological purity within the Republican Party, suddenly decided in the summer of 2015 to shelve their exhaustively preached beliefs. Rather than backing the type of primary candidate they had been insisting upon for years, in order to save the party and the country, they decided instead to throw their support behind a fiscally liberal, pro-entitlement, socially and constitutionally disinterested candidate named Donald Trump.

In some cases, their motivation was increased ratings and other forms of revenue-related exposure; Trump, after all, has always been a big-ticket item. In other cases, cronyism was the culprit; the New York billionaire has a number of longtime friends and even business partners in the media.

The result was an exodus of ideology from a number of influential conservative-media mainstays. They willingly lent conservative credentials to Trump, when the candidate hadn’t

earned them. They downplayed his abhorrent conduct (everything from the mocking of American POWs and disabled people to the advancing conspiracy theories on the Iraq War and the JFK assassination). They even [served as attack dogs](#) against Trump's primary opponents, on occasion, and were among the first to call for the rest of the field to actually leave the race. Most notably, they sidelined (but only for Trump) their conservative principles – their professional and supposedly ideological lifeblood.

These people did Trump an *enormous* favor in his successful primary campaign. Needless to say, he owes them – big time.

That's why I wasn't particularly surprised when a Fox News host from the "alt right" – one who is arguably Trump's most enthusiastic cheerleader in the conservative media – recently announced that Trump had written a blurb for the back of his new book.

Putting aside for a moment that there's an obvious conflict of interest in a politician endorsing the product of a news-media figure who is actively covering his campaign, the move made sense. After all, when someone scraps their dignity to routinely shill for your presidential run, the *least* you can do is write a short blurb for their book, right?

Of comical note, however, was the blurb itself: the first sentence simply calling the book "huge" and the second (and last) saying it will help "Make America Great Again."

As an author myself (one admittedly far less successful than those who benefit from regular national-television exposure), I would be grossly disappointed if someone I admired used the back of my book for a phoned-in advertisement for them self. I would have enough self-respect to not even let such a thing go to print.

As *any* author can tell you, it isn't easy to write a book. It is a lengthy, often grueling process to pour your heart and

soul into tens of thousands of words, and it's one heck of an achievement for *any* writer to get their work published. If someone agrees to provide a blurb for the finished product, the *very least* you would expect of them is to leave the impression that they cared enough to have actually read some of what you've written. It's just common respect.

Then again, to shill for Trump is to lose his respect.

Last week, when news reports began to surface announcing that Trump had narrowed his running-mate picks down to Chris Christie, Newt Gingrich and Mike Pence, I knew who he'd end up choosing.

I knew it wouldn't be the governor from New Jersey who used the last, dying breath of his own presidential campaign to cut Marco Rubio off at the knees (at a time when Rubio was emerging as a potential threat to a Trump primary victory). I knew it wouldn't be that man who later stood on stage behind Trump, allowing himself to be used as an expressionless wall-trophy for an individual who had, just weeks earlier, accused him of lying under oath about Bridgegate.

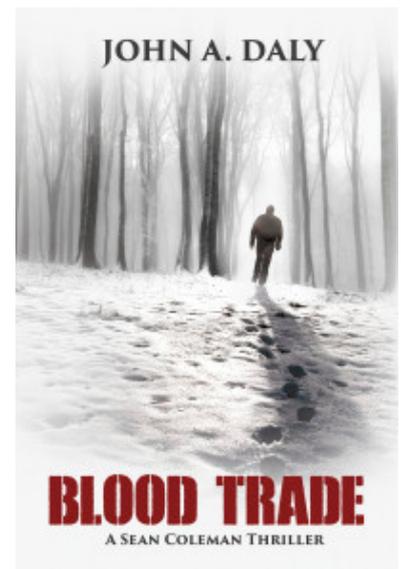
I also knew Trump wouldn't choose the former Speaker of the House, who had spent months actively campaigning for the position by performing verbal acrobatics on national television to normalize Trump, and label the candidate's principled opposition as "elites" and "establishment types." I knew it wouldn't be that guy who tossed out the panicked, last-minute idea of testing Muslims on their sharia law thoughts, in hopes of winning over Trump's affection.

I knew that *none* of the politicians who've been buttering up Trump would get the nod, because to shill for Trump is to lose his respect. And respect is required in the pick of a Vice Presidential candidate.

No, Trump's choice ended up being who I figured it would be – the guy who had yet to diminish himself for the presumptive

nominee: Mike Pence.

Prior to being picked, Pence hadn't really gone to bat much for Trump. He actually opposed Trump on a number of issues, and even endorsed Ted Cruz in the Indiana primary. In other words, Pence wasn't a pro-Trump shill. The Indiana governor has largely preserved his dignity throughout this election cycle,



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I believe that, despite Trump's well-established distaste for those who disagree with him, he has a hidden respect for such people (and those who stand on their principles). Being that he's been surrounded for much of his life by suck-ups and schmoozers, this probably shouldn't be all that much of a surprise. In fact, I would venture to guess that those Trump has specifically said he *doesn't* respect, are among those he actually respects the most.

After watching Sunday's [cringe-worthy 60 Minutes interview](#) with Trump and Pence (that reminded me of the awkward dynamic

between Gob and Michael Bluth on *Arrested Development*), however, maybe Trump would have been better off choosing someone he truly *doesn't* respect.

Fortunately for Trump, the position Pence has put himself in by agreeing to be the VP nominee is likely to soon change him into the very type of person Trump is used to dealing with...and also disrespecting.

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## Has the Media Corrupted More Conservatives Than DC?

There's a school of thought (one that I subscribe to) that believes that most people who run for public office do so out of a genuine desire to help their fellow citizens. They come in with earnest principles and an honest platform, but if they end up in Washington, and stick around too long, they begin to view politics as a career, and no longer a public service.



The allure of special interests and the growing hunger to stay in power changes people. It corrupts them. They compromise their principles, and though not every politician falls into this trap, plenty of them do.

The public at large is aware of this, which accounts for much of the "anti-establishment" resentment that presidential candidates like Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders have benefited

from.

In fact, Trump struck a chord early on with many Republicans by declaring that his personal wealth and his resistance to outside donors (the latter of which was [never really true](#)), would preclude him from being corrupted by outside forces. In a way, the point made sense. Not *a lot* of sense, being that Trump has built his brand off of doing whatever it takes to *expand* his net worth – not be *content* with it, but Trump presented the narrative with enough conviction that it worked.

Voters on the political right have been particularly sensitive to the notion of Washington robbing their representatives of their principles. They elect candidates who promise to shrink government, defend the constitution, and protect individual rights...then they watch those leaders (even when in the majority) preside over government expansion and the additional loss of freedoms.

From this frustration arose anti-establishment movements like the Tea Party, and the embrace of outsider politicians like Ted Cruz, who promised to pull “RINOs” and “squishy Republicans” back into line in Washington. Influential conservatives on television and radio hailed (and even campaigned for) these efforts, demanding ideological purity within the Republican Party. They cheered on the government shutdown of 2013. They celebrated the removal of Eric Cantor. They pressured John Boehner into stepping down from his Speakership. And they did all of these things in the name of principled conservatism, a message on which they had the Republican base largely behind them.

It's been less than seven months since Boehner retired, and the political landscape within the establishment GOP has certainly changed since then. But instead of a principled conservative now leading the party, it's being led by the presumptive presidential nominee Donald Trump, a big-government, constitutionally disinterested, unprincipled

autocrat who recently [responded to the questioning of his conservative beliefs](#) with, "...at this point, who cares?"

How did this happen? How did a man who personifies so much of what the Republican base disdained for so long wind up as their standard bearer?

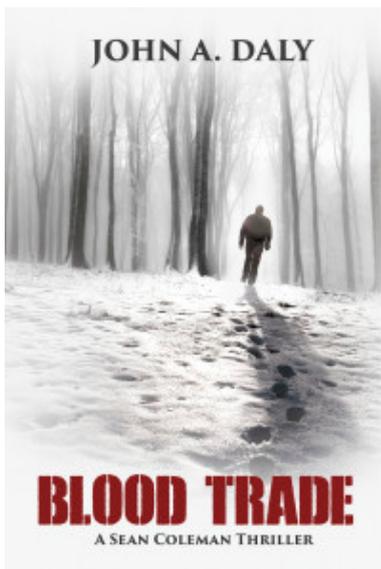
As it turns out, there's a force in American politics that is even more effective at corrupting and killing conservative principles than Washington DC. It's called the conservative media.

Some of the nation's loudest and most influential conservative voices over the past several years haven't belonged to politicians. They've belonged to media personalities. That observation might not reflect well on the leadership of the Republican Party, but it's the reality. And among those media conservatives are some who've built a large, loyal following of like-minded listeners who've come to trust them.

It was people like Rush Limbaugh who cheered on the government shutdown in the name of debt control. It was people like Sean Hannity who ad nauseam labeled those who opposed it as *RINOs* and *fake conservatives*. It was people like Laura Ingraham who called for the heads of Republican leaders deemed not conservative enough to represent the party. Whether or not you agreed with the methods and strategies they supported, you would have had a hard time questioning the principles behind them.

So when these people (and several others), suddenly shelved those ideals to promote, normalize, and run interference for the candidacy of Donald Trump (a man far more liberal and dishonest than any of the Republican politicians they've bastardized over the years), their collective efforts managed to convince a lot of otherwise conservative-leaning folks that the evolution from principle to personality was a righteous one.

The motivations of these ringleaders vary. Some of them have longstanding personal friendships with Trump. In other cases, ratings are the goal; Trump's a proven ratings juggernaut. I wouldn't even rule out the presumption of political favors and appointments with a few select people. Regardless, their advocacy has been compelling enough to convince a lot of their fans that Trump is indeed a conservative, regardless of his past and the contrary things he regularly says.



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This disingenuous validation of Trump's philosophical credentials, along with the candidate's populist appeal, has contributed to what columnist Charles Krauthammer [recently called](#) an "ideological earthquake." The aftershocks from that earthquake have led to a rhetorical sea-change that has been nothing short of mind-numbing.

Suddenly, it's the anti-Trump conservatives that are "RINOs." It's the grassroots conservatives that are the "establishment types." Former right-wing heroes like Newt Gingrich have

jumped onto the Trump Train, and are railing against “Washington elites” (which in Gingrich’s case displays a stunning lack of self-awareness). Even Tea Party champion, Sarah Palin, is now using her media clout to campaign on behalf of Trump (and his fiscally liberal platform) against the Republican Party’s leading voice on entitlement reform, Paul Ryan.

We have witnessed a breathtaking exodus of conservative thought over the past year, in large part because of the self-serving decisions of conservative-media figureheads to pervert it. To listen to them continue to accuse “establishment” Republican politicians of compromising their principles is now laughable, considering that they’ve now done arguably more to derail the conservative movement.

They have become the corrupt politicians that they have excoriated for years – once true believers in the cause, but now motivated by self-interest to preach one belief system while demonstrating another. If only there were media term-limits; I kid.

It should be noted that other, less known media conservatives have stepped up to grab onto the loose reins of this driver-less stagecoach. Several appear to be admirable, principled people who ironically never believed (nor called for) a purity test for the Republican Party in the first place. I’ll likely profile some of them in a future column.

Hopefully, they’ll earn themselves a larger platform, and one day stage their own anti-establishment take-over of the old guard.

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# Why Megyn Kelly and Newt Gingrich Will Help Cable News Ratings

☒ Fox News recently announced that *America Live* host, Megyn Kelly, will be getting her own prime-time show beginning this Fall. For fans like myself, this was great news. I've long recognized Kelly as a standout performer on the network, and there's something almost prideful in watching someone like her rise up through the ranks of their profession through a lot of hard work, real talent, and proven integrity. She'll be a real asset in her new position.

Though Fox News still dominates the cable news ratings, the truth is that their prime-time lineup (including *The O'Reilly Factor* and *Hannity*) isn't pulling quite as strong of numbers as it once did. Megyn Kelly's afternoon show, however, has added to its audience over time, and has led the way in increased daytime viewership for the network. Clearly, this didn't go unnoticed by Fox executives.

Promoting Kelly to prime-time was smart. What she brings to the table is the capacity to bring in new viewers who typically wouldn't tune into the network during that time because they're turned off by the often overbearing style of Bill O'Reilly and the overt partisanship of Sean Hannity. Kelly obviously won't be replacing either of those personalities (my guess is that Greta Van Susteren will be the one taking the hit), but she will surely add some freshness and variety to the line-up.

Kelly has set herself aside as someone who is very much in touch with the concerns of her viewers. She listens to them, and does an excellent job of pinning down guests with the questions people want answers to. It's clear in her

presentation that she researches stories exhaustively, and unlike many in the business, she's more concerned with getting the story right than *being* right. Sadly, that's a real rarity today.

How will that style translate to a time-slot in which much of the opinionated analysis on *all* cable news networks is loud, animated, and ideologically-driven? I actually think she'll carve out her own niche quite well.

Likeability and charm aside, Kelly has a genuineness and strong moral presence about her that lets her make a real connection with people. It's not all that different, really, than how people once viewed Oprah Winfrey. That's a *good* thing, and that factor should draw in a prime-time audience more diverse than the one Fox News typically attracts.

Fox isn't the only news network mixing up their prime-time programming. CNN recently announced that they'll be resurrecting *Crossfire*, their once very popular program that pitted opposing sides of the political spectrum against each other, on equal footing, in sharp debate.

The return of this format to prime-time isn't all that exciting in itself. After all, CNN tried it a couple of years ago with *Parker Spitzer*, which was a colossal flop. What might make this attempt different, however, is that former Speaker of the House and presidential candidate, Newt Gingrich, will be representing the conservative side of the table.

One of the reasons news networks other than Fox have long struggled to attract conservative-thinking viewers is because they don't feature individuals, in important roles, that conservatives respect. This is primarily due to the liberal bubble of like-mindedness that surrounds the media industry. The industry largely doesn't understand the conservative viewpoint. They're hostile to it, and they don't take it serious enough or lend it enough credibility to accurately

represent it.

The acquisition of Gingrich, however, shows that CNN may finally be learning something from their past mistakes. Gingrich is one the most competent and compelling voices for conservatism that we have in this country today. Mitt Romney certainly figured this out, much to his dismay, back during the 2012 primaries.

While most of the media presents the conservative argument as a lone, defensive voice against a merciless onslaught of leftist, bumper-sticker cliches, that's not what CNN will be getting with Gingrich. Gingrich has become well known as a man who outright rejects the premises and sensibilities of the liberal media culture, and has a knack for taking ownership of the narratives on big issues. 

By making Gingrich one of *Crossfire's* hosts (and not merely a guest), I think CNN may finally be giving people like me a reason to tune into their network.

You know, with MSNBC recently falling back into last place among the cable news networks, one would think that *they* would be announcing big changes to their programming as well. They haven't, and I don't expect them to. MSNBC has demonstrated a complete inability to address ratings-slumps and credibility-problems with anything other than a revolving door of snarky, left-wing-media activists dedicated to promoting and defending the Obama administration.

There was a time, after Comcast came in, when I was hopeful that the network might actually mend its ways. That's clearly not going to happen... And how ironic is it that an entity that has invested itself so deeply in the platitude of "change" absolutely refuses to do so itself?

Their continued losses will hopefully be the other networks' gains.

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# Guilty Pleasure: Watching Newt Neuter the Mainstream Media

✘ For media-conscious conservatives, there is perhaps no greater aggravation than that of the prevailing liberal tilt that exists within the mainstream media. Every day, we see or read of fresh examples of bias that we wish we could simply laugh off, but can't because we understand how important the role of news conveyers are in shaping public opinion. From the absurd Democratic narratives that they instinctively lend credence to, to the selective reporting and astounding double-standards that they spread across the airwaves, the media has long been in need of a bold and brash wake-up call to force them to look at themselves, and at the joke they've made of their profession.

Low ratings and dwindling subscriptions certainly haven't done the trick. Neither have the words of media critics and watchdog organizations who regularly offer a compelling case against them. Even when journalists within the mainstream media's own ranks bring attention to the problem, nothing changes.

*Until* something changes, the best chance conservatives have to marginalize the influence of the liberal media is to stop *playing the game* on the media's terms. An ideologically-slanted media shouldn't be the people who frame our national debates. After all, every recent poll has shown that Americans no longer trust them. Conventional media-wisdom needs to be publicly beaten into shape the moment blatant favoritism is put on display. As some of us were reminded earlier this week,

there is one man who is particularly gifted at doing this: Former Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich.

For those of you who didn't see the [Newt Gingrich/Thomas Friedman exchange](#) from last Sunday's *Meet the Press*, I highly recommend that you check it out. Gingrich took on the uber-liberal *New York Times* columnist on the wide-spread media narrative that conservatives are too "extreme" when it comes to the issue of abortion. Gingrich absolutely obliterated Friedman by pointing out that Barack Obama voted three times to support post-birth abortions (the killing of born-alive babies that survive an abortion attempt). He also pointed out that the president supports tax-payer funded, late-term abortions. Yet the media absolutely refuses to label Obama's position on abortion as "extreme". Gingrich argued that there is no more extreme position that exists in our politics. By the end of the segment, he had the normally snide and over-confident Friedman (who host David Gregory tried repeatedly to bail out of the mauling) squirming, and trying to disqualify himself from having to answer the charge by claiming that he was just there as a journalist. Rarely do we witness a media figure humiliated so soundly.

Of course, this wasn't the first time we've seen such a display from Newt.

Gingrich first proved himself in the media watchdog role four years ago, at the 2008 Republican National Convention, when he was asked by an MSNBC reporter to comment on Sarah Palin's weak resume in reference to the vice presidential position she was running for. Many might remember that this was a wildly popular media narrative back then. Mainstream pundits were up in arms over the notion that some *hockey-mom* from Alaska could potentially become a heartbeat away from the presidency. Never was there any concern from those same people when it came to Barack Obama, who unlike Sarah Palin, never governed a city or state. In fact, he had no leadership experience at all, yet the media never questioned his credentials. Gingrich [went off](#)

[on the absurdity](#) of the media-driven narrative, running down a list of Palin's numerous accomplishments before challenging the reporter to list a single thing that Obama had done, other than "talk and write." It was such a thumping that you had to wonder if the unsuspecting reporter might have cried himself to sleep that night.

In early 2012, during the Republican presidential primaries, candidate Gingrich made sport out of several of the misleading and irrelevant questions he received from members of the media, but it was CNN's John King who took an outright scolding during one of the debates. Mere days before the important South Carolina primary, ABC News decided that it would be a relevant venture to pursue an interview with Gingrich's ex-wife and let her unload on her former husband. Gingrich's divorce, which had begun over twelve years earlier, was reportedly a messy one. The media, of course, was well aware of this. Just days after interviewer Brian Ross seemed to take unsettling joy in letting Marianne Gingrich dish on Newt, John King chose to confront Gingrich with the allegations she made as the first question of a nationally televised GOP debate. Newt's [passionate response](#) was an absolute indictment of the mainstream media's vindictive nature toward conservatives. After all, this is the same media who actively worked to protect both President Clinton and Presidential candidate John Edwards from accusations of infidelity. And both of those Democratic politicians we're fooling around on their wives in real time – not well over a decade earlier! The public condemnation, that left John King looking like his parents had just caught him with his hand in the cookie jar, struck a chord not only with the enthusiastic crowd in attendance... Many believe the moment actually won Gingrich the state primary, where he had previously been behind in the polls.

Last week at the Republican National Convention, Gingrich decisively smacked down MSNBC's Chris Matthews over the long-

held, liberal belief that speaking of our expanding welfare burden is somehow an example of racism. Gingrich quickly [rattled off](#) the single argument that shuts the entire false narrative down cold: Pointing out how many Americans are on food-stamps isn't racist. Identifying the food-stamp programs with racial minorities and perpetuating a stereotype (which is what much of the liberal media has done over the past couple of years) is what's racist.

Aside from all of these spectacles being really, really fun to watch, it makes you wonder just how much different the media environment in this country would be if newsrooms actually encouraged some diversity of thought. Imagine if they made an actual attempt to encourage people with traditional, easily-defensible viewpoints like Gingrich into their profession to balance out the overwhelming liberal group-think that exists there now. I'm not just talking about those in front of the camera, but those behind it as well. Just think of the number of ideological biases that would be recognized before they ever made it to air or print. It seems to me that such a move would allow the media to earn back much of the credibility they've lost.

Will that ever happen? Unfortunately, no.

Sadly, for now, conservatives will have to deal with the media the best they can, hopefully by taking a few pages out of the Newt Gingrich media playbook.

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## **What Romney's Campaign Can**

# Learn from Newt Gingrich

☒ Back during the Republican debates, I often thought to myself that *Newt Romney* (a monolithic character coined by Michele Bachmann as a method of criticizing her GOP rivals) would actually be a really good presidential candidate for the GOP. Mitt Romney and Newt Gingrich's best qualities seemed to fill the void of where the other was lacking. Mitt Romney was smooth, both in his appearance and delivery. He had little political baggage, a solid business background, a good record of achievement, and he oozed confidence and competence at every pore. Newt Gingrich showed an uncanny knack for delivering the kind of dialogue conservatives were starved to hear. He was well-researched, blunt, full of ideas, and showed a genuine passion for returning this country to greatness.

In the end, after a bitterly-contested primary, Romney came out on top and secured the nomination. What he hasn't secured, however, is the passion and messaging it takes to become a strong candidate in the eyes of the electorate.

In a perfect country, candidates would be judged primarily on their experience, their vision, and their records of achievement. But we don't live in a perfect country. We live in a media-driven country where *talking heads* can muddle facts and logic so effectively that all it takes is establishing an emotional connection with voters to become the leader of the free world.

In my [last column](#), I described how the Obama campaign has been successfully employing television advertisements in swing-states that are striking a chord with voters. The ads seem to be having the most significant effect in Ohio, where state-wide polls now show that the president has pulled up to an eight point lead over Mitt Romney. Not so long ago, the two were essentially tied in that state. Despite the numerous, non-partisan fact-checking groups that have debunked the

content of the Obama ads as works of fiction, there's no doubt that they are working with voters.

Again, in a perfect country, you could rely on the national news media to conclusively expose such falsehoods. As we all know, however, most of the news media has a vested interest in Obama winning re-election, so they're not going to be particularly helpful.

For those of us who understand just how terrible of an economic situation this country is in, the current, prevailing narrative of the presidential campaign is beyond frustrating. We're watching President Obama turn the United States of America into Greece before our very eyes. We see \$16 trillion of U.S. debt, European levels of unemployment becoming the new norm, anemic economic growth, and new entitlement programs being added to our already failing ones. Yet, the administration's defense – a defense that actually seems to be a winning one at the moment – is that *Mitt Romney is rich and he doesn't care about you!*

It would be laughable if the stakes weren't so high.

The commercials have put Romney on the defensive, and thus far his campaign hasn't figured out how to deal with the slander. It makes you wonder if Romney's guys honestly believed that all they'd have to do to win in November was point at Obama's abysmal economic numbers and offer up a competent alternative in their guy. It's far from that simple, of course.

The Romney campaign needs to get it through their skulls that while the facts play to their advantage, they won't guarantee their candidate a win unless he bluntly addresses the nation's monumental problems with the passion and dedication that they deserve.

Newt Gingrich was a master at this. In the Republican primary debates, while Romney was choosing his words carefully and stating a logical case for his candidacy, Gingrich was

expressing absolute appall over the consequential failures of the Obama administration. He framed his arguments not just with facts and figures, but broke them down into what those facts and figures meant to the average American. He spoke to different trades and age demographics, using the word "breathtaking" over and over again when describing our country's downward spiral under the leadership of President Obama. With Gingrich, you were left with the impression that he was legitimately alarmed with what was happening to his country. His passion was infectious. So much so that whenever he competed in a televised debate, his poll numbers would jump up significantly the next day. That passion even won him the South Carolina primary.

What Gingrich proved is that if you deliver a message that is not only strong but also *personal*, you can effectively combat whatever stigmas you've been branded with. The narrative becomes less about you as a person, and more about what you're running on. As we know, Newt obviously had a lot of well-known personal and professional baggage that would have made most presidential candidates a non-starter. For that reason, no one believed that he stood any chance with voters in the socially-conservative state of South Carolina. He proved them wrong.

In Mitt Romney's case, the stigma that's hurting him isn't nearly as tall of hurdle to overcome as Gingrich had to deal with. Romney's not on his third wife. He's never had to deal with a public, messy divorce. He's never been brought up on ethics charges. The only stigma he has to deal with is that of being *really, really rich*. And if he fixes his messaging, no one will care about that stigma.

What does Romney need to do?

First of all, he needs to stop being on the defensive. It's not *his* leadership that is presiding over a nation in rapid decline. It's President Obama's.

Romney needs to start expressing outright appall over the mind-numbing lack of urgency coming from President Obama when it comes to dealing with the most dire challenges our country faces. He can no longer go the route of simply saying that the president is just *in over his head*. He needs to sound the alarm, and frame exactly what Obama's neglect and failed policies have done not just to the country as a whole, but to individual Americans and their families. He needs to explain why it's going to keep getting harder for people to find employment, provide for their families, and leave their children with the same opportunities that they grew up with.

He needs to stop worrying about differentiating Romneycare from Obamacare. Massachusetts is not the United States of America. Instead he needs to explain, in blunt terms, the burdens Obama's law places on the quality of our healthcare and the costs it places on our family budgets.

He needs to stop *assuming* that people understand what \$16 trillion in national debt means to them and their families, and actually *explain* it to them.

He needs to explain to parents why their kids who just graduated from college can't find jobs, and why the job market will continue to struggle until the president stops standing in the way of pro-growth policies.

He needs to speak out against the political polarization that has left Americans at odds with Americans. He should tell voters that as their president, he won't waste a single breath blaming others for the country's problems. Instead he'll commit to fixing those problems. He should tell voters that he won't create false controversies to distract them from the very real challenges our country faces.

Most importantly, it's not enough that he directs people to his website and speaks in generic terms about his alternate vision. He needs to make the case, and show some gusto as he

does it. I don't buy the repeated notion that Romney's *just not that kind of guy* when his supporters try to defend his lack of enthusiasm. That's bologne. I've seen the man show some some heart in past debates. I know he's capable of it. We just don't see it nearly enough. My guess is that his handlers are worried he'll come across as angry or condescending if he tries, but that's a chance I think they'll have to take.

This election is absolutely winnable for Mitt Romney. He still has time on his side. He certainly has the failed record of President Obama on his side, and that's not going to change between now and November. All he has to do is take a page out of the Gingrich playbook, and make a strong, impassioned case for why the country desperately needs him right now. If he does that, his personal wealth becomes a non-issue.