

Take Care of this House (expanded edition)

By Matthew Carnicelli, Human Potential Left



Could it be that the die is already cast, the pattern already etched in stone? Does it even matter which candidate America elects in November 2012? In this astrologer's opinion, based on an extensive study of United States Inaugural charts, the answer is both yes and no. In his opinion America is almost certainly headed towards extreme crisis during the term of the next President, a crisis unlike any we have experienced in recent years; and yet it may also be that the specific expression and ultimate outcome of this crisis is entirely dependent on us.

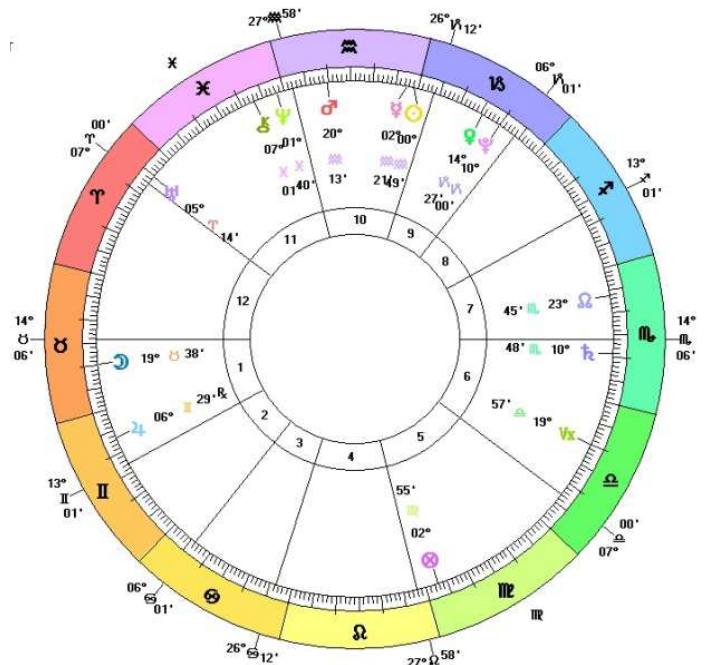
Introduction

Contemporary-era Presidents of the United States are inaugurated every four years at or around 12 noon on January 20th in the year following a presidential election. Now, I say at or around because sometimes the actual inauguration moment can be delayed as much as an hour (as it was with John Kennedy in 1961) or even a day (as in the case of Zachary Taylor, who in 1849 literally refused to take the Oath of Office on the day duly prescribed by the Constitution because it fell on the Sabbath, and only took it the next day, March 5). It is nothing more than mere coincidence that both those Presidents died in office. However, the assumption underlying both my study and this piece is that the astrological symbolism embedded in the precise moment that the oath is taken persuasively describes the archetypal challenges and opportunities to be confronted or embraced by an incoming Administration.

To anticipate in advance an oft-posed astrological objection to this theory, I argue that the President elect's physical taking of the oath to uphold our Constitution is no mere formality – and that a President-elect who announced that he had no intention of taking the oath would never be allowed to simply assume his office. I cite in defense of my theory the fact that when it even appeared that President-elect Barack Obama and Chief Justice John Roberts had flubbed the swearing-in ceremony in 2009, it was thought necessary that the process be re-enacted, with the words precisely repeated, the following day. The Framers did not believe the swearing of an oath to defend the Constitution an empty rhetorical gesture. The Constitution may indeed stipulate that a President takes office precisely at Noon on January 20th – but I submit that only the man or woman willing to take this solemn oath to uphold the Constitution is entitled to its protection in this area.

The Next Inaugural Moment

Assuming tradition stands, and this swearing-in indeed proceeds on the day and time stipulated by the United States Constitution, I submit that the cosmic weather for the next four years is beyond that of the routinely stormy. The likely Inaugural chart for 2013 features one harrowing feature: a nearly exact hard aspect between Moon in the first house and Mars in the tenth, suggesting either an aroused & angry populous or a wounded people having experienced a grievous shock. The hard aspect in question is a square within '35 minutes of orb (assuming a Noon ceremony) – and hence extraordinarily tight. In fact, was the ceremony to happen a bit later, with the Oath being administered closer to 1 pm, then the orb of this aspect would become nearly exact. I note with great sadness that, as is, it represents the 5th tightest hard aspect between Moon & Mars in US inaugural history. To offer a degree of perspective, America has been through quite a number of crises over the past fifty years (9/11, Watergate, Iran Contra, the Clinton Impeachment, etc.) – but none of these were described by a nearly exact hard aspect between Moon and Mars. For purposes of definition, I stipulate that a hard aspect, considered in the astrological literature the most challenging and compelling configuration between two bodies, consists of one of these five aspects: conjunction (0°), square (90°), opposition (180°), sesquiquadrate (135°) or semi-square (45°).



As a point of reference, a hard aspect between Moon and Mars was present in each of these previous Inaugural charts.

Year	President	Aspect / orb*	Events
1789	Washington	Square / 2°34'	Hamilton-Jefferson clash over implied versus enumerated powers & creation of the First Bank of the United States
1805	Jefferson	Square / 4°40'	Escalation of Napoleonic Wars; Jefferson imposes an embargo on exports to shield American shipping from involvement in the conflict
1837	Van Buren	Opposition / 5°30'	Economic depression
1841	Harrison	Square / 0°2'	Death of President due to illness
1849**	Taylor	Opposition / 0°28'	Death of President due to illness; sectional tensions over slavery escalate, resulting in controversial <i>Compromise of 1850</i> , which includes an infamous Federal Fugitive Slave Law
1857	Buchanan	Square / 4°	Sectional tensions further escalate as a result of <i>Dred Scott decision</i> and John Brown's attack on Harper's Ferry and eventual execution (Actual configuration is Moon conjunct Saturn square Uranus-Nodes)
1861	Lincoln I	Sesquiquadrate / 0°17' orb	Outbreak of Civil War
1865	Lincoln II	Conjunction / 0°36'	Assassination; Johnson impeachment; beginning of "Radical Reconstruction" (Actual configuration is Moon-Mars square Sun-Chiron)
1877	Hayes	Semi-Square / 1°33'	End of Reconstruction as a result of deal to award contested election to loser of popular vote, Rutherford Hayes; great railroad strike of 1877
1881	Garfield	Square / 1°35'	Assassination
1889	Harrison	Conjunction / 6°33'	Massacre at Wounded Knee, coup d' état against Queen Liliuokalani in Hawaii; Passage of Sherman Anti-Trust Act
1901	McKinley	Conjunction / 7°30'	Assassination (Actual configuration is Mars-Moon-IC)
1913	Wilson	Conjunction / 2°31'	Outbreak of war in Europe, escalation of suffragette movement
1917	Wilson	Square / 0°0' orb	Sinking of the Lusitania, American entry into WWI, women win the right to vote, passage of prohibition (Actual configuration is Sun conjunct Mars square Moon)
1921	Harding	Square / 3°	Death of President due to illness
1929	Hoover	Opposition / 0°43'	Stock Market crash of 1929, Great Depression
1937	Roosevelt	Opposition / 3°51'	Outbreak of WWII, Recession of 1937, FDR Court-packing scheme
1961	Kennedy	Square / 7°58'	Assassination of President; entry into Vietnam conflict; Bay of Pigs invasion; Cuban Missile Crisis (Actual configuration is Mars square Moon quincunx Uranus)

* For the purposes of this study, a time of exactly 12:00 pm was used where an exact Inaugural time could not be confirmed.

** Zachary Taylor's inauguration is calculated for 12:00 on March 5, 1849, not March 4th, the day the Constitution stipulates that he takes office.

The above listing represents a complete accounting of every Moon-Mars hard aspect configuration in US Inaugural history. Note how the more precise aspects tend to produce extremely malefic expressions. To reiterate, the aspect in this next Inaugural moment is as close to exact as in any of the six instances highlighted in the table. Note also that this Inaugural Mars makes another hard aspect to Uranus, an exact semi-square (or 45° aspect) – suggesting an even greater potential for unexpected, erratic developments, if not a predilection for martial, rebellious behavior.

To provide additional perspective on these configurations, let me quote directly from Michael Munkasey's *Reflections on the Planetary Pictures*:

Moon plus Mars

Emotional reactions energized by people or events. Inner passions evoked due to interactions with people or situations. Hyper-emotional responses which may get out of control. Outbursts of passion and / or rage.

Moon plus Mars plus Uranus

Pressures to perform, even in difficult conditions. Physical dangers possible from unexpected events or situations.

Obviously, no single astrological configuration should be viewed outside of the context of the larger Inaugural chart, not to mention the likely overarching cosmic weather for the larger four year period and the President-elect's chart. Unfortunately, this likely overarching cosmic weather is anything but reassuring. As I noted when I first touched on the explosive potentials for this next Administration, in my 2010 Pluto in Capricorn study, [Size Matters: Understanding the Size-Related Dynamics of Our Emerging American Crisis](#):

Add to this the arrival of the transiting Uranus-Pluto square in cardinal signs, which will form its first exact aspect in June 2012, and make 6 more additional exact aspects through April 2015 - several of which will be in close proximity to any July 4, 1776 United States natal Sun . To give some sense of the generic impact of Uranus in hard aspect to Pluto, without involvement of the US Sun (which itself is typically associated in mundane studies with either the President / ruler of a country, or alternatively, a nation's 'direction', particularly in a democracy), consider this brief chronology (dates given are for the period from the first exact aspect in a series to the last, an orb of at least several months on either end is advised):

September 1792 - July 1794 (opposition): National unity lost, Republican & Federalist parties formed; Citizen Genet arrives in America and foments unrest against Washington's policy of neutrality; Louis XVI & Marie Antoinette executed; Jefferson resigns from Washington's cabinet; 'The Terror' in France, worst days of French Revolution; Robespierre executed; Whiskey Rebellion

January 1820 - September 1821 (waning square): Tensions over slavery rise, leading to *Missouri Compromise*; 'Relief Party' formed in response to 'Panic of 1819' and subsequent economic depression; Relief Act passed; George III dies; revolutions in Spain & Piedmont; Bolivar defeats Spanish army in Venezuela, guaranteeing independence; property qualifications for voting removed in New York

June 1850 - March 1951 (conjunction): President Taylor dies; sectional tensions in US escalate; *Compromise of 1850*, including new Federally-enforced Fugitive Slave Law; Louis Philippe dies; Louis Napoleon coup d'état in France

October 1876 - September 1877 (waxing square): Custer massacred at Little Big Horn; contested election of 1876, Hayes becomes President via deal to end Reconstruction; great railroad strike of 1877, accompanied by substantial violence and casualties

January 1901 - November 1902 (opposition): McKinley assassinated; Teddy Roosevelt takes over as President and announces centrist 'trust busting' plan; Queen Victoria dies

April 1932 - January 1934 (waning square): Hitler & Nazis win majority of seats in Weimar Republic election; FDR elected; Hitler named Chancellor; Reichstag fire; Hitler granted dictatorial powers; first concentration camps erected; boycott of Jews begins in Germany; US goes off gold standard

October 1965 - June 1966 (conjunction): Race riots in Watts and other major American cities; escalation of American involvement in Vietnam War; Voting Rights Act signed into law;

As anyone familiar with my recent essays will also be well aware, Pluto's current placement in the tropical sign of Capricorn coupled to Neptune's recent ingress into Pisces add additional ammunition to this already extraordinarily volatile cosmic mix. Briefly outlined, Pluto's last two passages through Capricorn (1515-1529, 1762-1778) coincides with the onset of, arguably, the two most influential revolutions in western history – the *Protestant Reformation* and the *American Revolution*. Neptune's last three passages through tropical Pisces (1520-1534, 1684-1697, 1847-1862) coincides with periods of intense, often faith-based political volatility – (a) the earliest phases of the *Protestant Reformation*, including its iconoclastic phase (in which religious images, be they statues, stained glass, or paintings, were destroyed by roaming hordes of 'reforming' believers) and the bloody Peasant's Wars of 1524-25; (b) the decidedly anti-Catholic, anti-absolutist *Glorious Revolution* of 1688 in England; (c) a series of more-or-less spontaneous political uprisings that erupt throughout Continental Europe in the years 1848-49, the *Revolutions of 1848* or *Springtime of the Peoples*; and (d), in the United States, the slow, inexorable rise of irreconcilable sectional tensions over the 'peculiar institution' of slavery which culminate, at the very end of this time band, with the outbreak of the *American Civil War*.

Possible Manifestations

The challenge in interpreting any symbolic indicator is that of recognizing and acknowledging the limits of one's imagination – since one can only forecast that which he or she can first imagine. My bias for this election cycle was always that Mitt Romney would win the Republican nomination and become the primary challenger to Barack Obama in November 2012. Given the current choice of candidates, the Republican electorate's intense desire to remove Obama from office (by any means necessary, I sometimes fear), the candidate's obvious financial and organizational advantages, and the relatively robust indicators in both Romney's personal chart as well as a chart that I have developed to specifically gauge a candidate's connection with what I describe as "the American collective", he appeared the sensible choice, especially given Iowa and New Hampshire voters' curious lack of enthusiasm for the equally electable and yet far more intellectually consistent Jon Huntsman. But given the 'interesting times' in which we live, common sense coupled to cosmic sense has sometimes proved a unreliable combination for forecasting developments. For instance, both a disgraced former Speaker of the House and a philosophically insular former United States Senator from Pennsylvania generated a previously unfathomable degree of enthusiasm among GOP primary voters. That a candidate as extreme as Rick Santorum was even on our national radar this late in an election cycle should be ample testament to just how 'interesting' and dangerous our moment in time truly is. It remains to be seen whether a credible third-party candidate will emerge between now and next November – and become a de-facto kingmaker by siphoning off support from either Obama or Romney.

It is not my intention in this article, revised nearly nine months in advance of the next President's Inauguration, and with no firm knowledge of whom that man might be, to delineate this entire chart. But I am prepared to outline a number of possible scenarios in which this explosive symbolism might express itself. This should not be considered a definitive list – but merely a preliminary look at some potential expressions.

First off, the 2012 General Election process is likely to be problematic. Transiting Mercury will go retrograde at 5:58 pm EST on November 6th, 2012, the day of the election. This factor alone suggests the likelihood of massive confusion at the polls, likely physical breakdowns of voting equipment, a climate in which the dissemination of rumors is apt to outpace the spread of accurate information, and the potential for an electoral outcome that may not be entirely clear for as long as four-to-six weeks afterwards – and never truly accepted by supporters of the losing candidate. As a point of reference, let me note that the last time transiting Mercury changed direction precisely on an Election Day was November 7, 2000, at 9:22 pm EST. As most Americans will doubtless remember, it was just after this moment that the networks withdrew their projection of Florida for Vice President Gore – and thus initiated our most recent electoral nightmare. Given the systematic fashion in which Republican-dominated state legislatures have ratified legislation intended to deliberately suppress turnout of poorer and more elderly voters thought more likely to support Democratic candidates, and the Justice Department's current efforts to reverse some of these measures, it would be prudent to anticipate massive controversy and confusion surrounding this vote even if Mercury were not changing direction on that election day.

Thus, should President Obama indeed win re-election in a close and perhaps contested outcome, which is my current bias, then I can easily see this Moon-Mars-Uranus configuration describing a potential for rebelliousness on the extreme right – who no doubt, egged on by FOX News and right wing media reports of pro-Democratic voting irregularities, will convince themselves that Obama stole the election and is therefore an illegitimate President. This narrative will fit like hand-in-glove within the larger narrative that has been used against Obama since 2009, a narrative that seeks to paint him as un-American, foreign, illegitimate, Muslim, and socialist. To that point, Mitt Romney's current campaign rhetoric, which asserts that Obama wants to replace America's alleged opportunity-based society with an entitlement-based society that owes its inspiration to Europe, represents yet another variation on this dishonest and profoundly dangerous de-legitimization theme. While I will admit upfront that I am voting for Obama, my ambivalence towards his Administration is perhaps best communicated via sharing a quip I came across a few months ago on an Internet basketball forum. As the originating poster phrased it, he was rooting for Romney to become the nominee inasmuch as his selection would insure that a Rockefeller Republican would be the next President of the United States, regardless of whether Obama or Romney won. Amidst a climate in which the center-leaning Obama can be accused of being either a socialist or the most dangerous President in American history, and his accuser taken seriously rather than made the butt end of uproarious jokes, every form of collective insanity should be thought of as on the table.

Another variation on this theme would be a scenario in which Obama wins re-election but the Republicans retain their hold on the House, while taking control in the Senate. Given the profoundly adversarial approach that Republicans have pursued since the start of the Obama Presidency, I can easily imagine a Constitutional crisis emerging during a 2nd term, perhaps yet another attempt at impeachment, but this time the conflict spills onto America's streets.

On the other hand, were Romney to win the Presidency in a disputed race, alongside GOP majorities in the House and Senate, and then attempt to impose draconian cuts in funding of essential safety net programs, we should expect this same rebellious energy to infect elements of the underclass, working poor, organized labor, and activist left. The phrase "creative destruction" is one traditionally associated with the deleterious short-term impact of laissez faire capitalism; but the student of history can easily identify other plausible illustrations of this phrase. For instance, as briefly noted earlier in this piece, American cities were host to numerous large scale riots during the Uranus-Pluto conjunctions of the 1960s. As Londoners discovered last summer, with Uranus and Pluto within 1° of forming their first exact square since those 1960s riots, a square that will form 7 separate times over the next 4 years, a riot can flare up under these volatile cosmic conditions as easily as an errant electrical spark can set a building aflame. Given that several instances of this square will form in tight aspect to any July 4, 1776 United States Sun, it is prudent to expect this volatility to viscerally impact both the next Congress & Administration as well as the American body politic.

Furthermore, given the precarious health of at least one of the liberal Justices on the Supreme Court, a Romney Presidency could very well lead to the reversal of Roe v. Wade – and thus thrust the issue of reproductive freedom onto the agenda of every state legislature every year, with Blue States consistently affirming a women's right to choose while many Red States prohibit the procedure entirely, and the relationship between proponents and opponents of reproductive choice becoming ever more confrontational and violent. As I've previously argued, given the intensely emotional rhetoric that surrounds this issue, a nation where abortion remains legal and safe in

one state but is deemed murder and relegated to back alley practitioners in another must also expect a tragic deterioration in the relationship between its member states. No good can come from this, none at all.

Given the precedent set by the 1929 Inaugural moment, it is conceivable that the next President will be confronted with yet another world financial crisis – a crisis that might have little to do with the actions of his or his predecessor's Administration. While most Americans are relatively familiar with the October 1929 Wall Street crash, far fewer understand that the stock market rebounded immediately afterwards, and that the first phase of the period we call the Great Depression was initially deemed merely a recession – at least until a German bank failure in 1931 led to a general freeze-up of credit in the tightly intertwined European and American banking systems, and the true onset of the period of economic futility that posterity remembers. In light of the austerity-driven crisis that continues to plague a European Union that has yet to decide if it desires an authentic political union or merely a likely unworkable economic “friends with benefits” relationship, it is prudent to expect the fate of the Greek, Italian, and Spanish peoples to impact every nation that participates in the globalized economy. Why any American of sound mind would want to replicate Europe's failed experiment with austerity is beyond me – but this is nonetheless what the oligarch-funded Tea Party movement advocates should Republicans assume total control of government.

Hence, another option that could easily manifest, either as an alternative to these scenarios or alongside them, is the emergence of a large-scaled people's movement for governmental reform and economic justice, a supersized version of Occupy Wall Street that would coalesce in response to any Congressional attempt to balance the budget on the backs of the middle class, working poor, and unemployed at a time of double-digit U-6 joblessness. The American middle and left's patience with this nation's political elites may not prove inexhaustible, especially amidst this intense cosmic weather – and even a restored Democratic Congress should not consider itself immune to such a reaction. In fact, given these potential scenarios, I would argue that this last scenario is the most positive expression of this emerging zeitgeist that I can imagine. Perhaps it will take an aroused, angry, but nonetheless non-violent popular movement to convince Democrats and Republicans to pay more attention to the authentic needs of the nation, and less to those of ideology-driven fanatics or corporate lobbyists.

Given the precedent set by the 1913, 1917 and 1937 Inaugural moments, I suppose it's theoretically possible that the United States could again find itself in the midst of a global military conflict. While I absolutely expect events in the Middle East to continue to command the next President's attention, and specifically anticipate intense political volatility in Iran during the years 2013-2014 (prompted, God-willing, by the start of a second Iranian revolution and not an Israeli-Iranian military conflict), it's nonetheless hard for me to imagine a scenario where a massive mobilization of American military resources would be advisable – although with Mars in the 10th house, a more limited mobilization remains plausible.

Needlessly to say, times of extraordinary psychic and political intensity have a tendency to encourage extreme reactions from both otherwise sane and seriously deranged individuals, many of the latter whom have yet to even be diagnosed, much less treated. **Hence, the potential for domestic terrorism, directed either against civilians or high government officials, should be thought of as exponentially higher during this period. While one man's incendiary rhetoric may not be intended as an invitation to assassination and mayhem, it can easily be heard that way by the clinically or collectively insane.**

Take Care of This House

My intention in writing this piece was not to offer a comprehensive forecast for the next Presidency, before the people have even spoken, but rather to alert as many Americans as possible to the explosive energy embedded in this next Inaugural moment, in an attempt to prevent the worst of these potentials from coming to pass. To echo how one of my teachers, Dennis Elwell, once described his primary function as an astrologer: “I'm not in the prediction business; I'm in the prevention business”.

The way I see it, America today still finds itself in the midst of a great economic crisis, a crisis that we collectively created, and hence can only successfully exit together. If recent experience should have taught us anything, it's truly that it takes a village to make or break an economy. Individual expressions of virtue are commendable and always to be recommended – but sometimes even the truly virtuous can be swept away by the tides of outrageous financial fortune while the guilty and politically well-connected do just fine. We can point fingers and create scapegoats or we can instead do whatever is necessary to correct the underlying dynamic that first created the problem, and thus guarantee that it can never happen again.

The way I see it, everything these candidates say and do from now on, until that next Inaugural moment, can have a material impact on how these volatile cosmic energies ultimately play out. I'd argue that they each have a responsibility to the nation that must trump any desire to win at all costs, even if it means losing their chance to be President. There is simply too much at stake this time. I may no longer be a Christian, but this contemporary Deist will nonetheless never forget Jesus' admonition against putting the affairs of the world ahead those of the

spirit: "For what profit a man if he gains the whole world yet loses his soul?" Dare I paraphrase Him here, to assert the obvious: "For what profit a man if he gains the Presidency yet loses his country?" And lose his country he may – or worse.

The way I see it, everything that the partisan media do and say from now on, until that next Inaugural moment, can have a powerful impact on the fashion in which these energies play out. We need to hold them accountable when they cross the line in the best way we have – by changing the channel, or finding another newspaper, magazine, or web site to read, and then letting their advertisers know that we're doing just that. As it is, according to a recent study, watching one of these flag-waving cable networks apparently leads its viewers to be less informed on the critical issues of the day than if they had been watching no television at all. Jefferson and Adams must weep in eternity.

Finally, the way I see it, a people inevitably get the democracy that they have collectively earned in consciousness. For what is government in a democracy except the inescapable reflection of the consciousness of the people who yearly elect it, are called on to constitute it, and too often seek to corrupt it? Hence, I argue that everything we say and do, from now on until the conclusion of our next President's term in office, can have a powerful impact on how these explosive currents ultimately play out. We can voluntarily choose to pay for safety nets and infrastructure repairs or weapons and bodyguards, to rebuild the land we love and restore the ties that bind us as Americans or to retreat into a profoundly narcissistic, self-righteous conception of liberty, a liberty that stands an excellent chance of tearing this nation to shreds in the decade to come. The choice is ours and ours alone.

Democracy is a creative, collaborative process. It requires us to listen to each other, argue with each other, curse at each other, find common ground with each other, and, ultimately, learn from each other. That's the beauty of our system – although it can sometimes feel less than beautiful. But when compared to the alternatives, it surely is beautiful. Democracy emphasizes the interconnectedness of people, the common interest that we share in everyone's life working out as best as God will allow. Think about it. The better your neighbor's life works out, the less of a burden he or she will ever be on you. And inasmuch as our 50 states share a collective roof that extends from sea to shining sea, we are inescapably neighbors – neighbors albeit in a vast, spiritually diverse, multi-ethnic, multi-racial village called America. Some may hate this new America; but every time I stop and think about us in this way, I swear, the beauty of our glorious mosaic takes my breath away.

"Take Care of This House" is one of the few musical numbers to emerge from Leonard Bernstein and Alan J. Lerner's eloquent and impassioned, if critically unloved bicentennial musical, *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue*. The song has since become a staple of the American Inaugural repertoire. Originally conceived as a trio to be sung by a soon-to-be departing John and Abigail Adams to a young runaway slave to whom they entrust the care of the President's new mansion, it celebrates the hope for a brighter future that the White House came to symbolize for a young nation. But as touching and beautiful as it is when heard in this context, it is perhaps even more eloquent, if harrowing, when it returns one last time, at the end of the musical's First Act, sung now by the assembled cast, at the announcement that Lincoln has been elected President and South Carolina is preparing to secede. And it is in that spirit that I close with its famous refrain:

*"Take care of this house;
Be always on call.
Care for this house;
It's the hope of us all."*

*Matthew Carnicelli, © 2012, All Rights Reserved
Originally published on January 4, 2012; revised April 15, 2012.*

For more on the cosmic weather impelling our times, see:

A Brief Look Forward – <http://hpleft.com/120307.html>
Size Matters – <http://hpleft.com/040810.html>
America at a Crossroads – <http://hpleft.com/090809.html>
Beginning of the End or End of the Beginning – <http://hpleft.com/012608.html>
"Protestant Wave" – <http://hpleft.com/020212.pdf>
A Bubble in Time – <http://hpleft.com/040303.html>
Winning the War for Hearts and Minds – <http://hpleft.com/110603.html>
The Bush Presidency: Storm Clouds at High Noon – <http://hpleft.com/highnoon.html>

About Matthew Carnicelli

Matthew Carnicelli became a political activist in response to 9-11.

"As I watched American Airlines Flight 11 and United Airlines Flight 175 crash into the World Trade Center's twin towers, I was overcome by a sense of dread. I feared that the planet was in danger of being overrun by yet another wave of collective insanity. I groped for a few days for something that I could do that might make a meaningful difference; and after the initial shock and numbness had worn off, I began to write."

A native New Yorker and experienced practitioner in the personal growth field, Matt quickly came to the conclusion that the President's way of thinking about the world was nearly as dangerous as the people he was trying to stop.

"The world changed for all of us on September 11th in ways that Bush clearly didn't understand. If God can still be said to exist, then He, She or It must be beyond all human understanding – even that of an American President."

As Matt saw it, the war against al Qaeda was, above all, a war of ideas. It could only be won if the United States continued to maintain the intellectual high ground with regard to world opinion – and, hence, crippled the terrorists' ability to further recruit or fundraise. Thus, the post-9/11 era ushered in a time when critical thinking, sensible strategy, and a return to an old fashioned American skepticism about the ability of any one person or branch of government to know the right way, would be required to once again make the nation safe and secure.

Although still a political novice, he became an early supporter of John Kerry, and one of a small group of committed online activists who would continue to ferociously argue his case long after the pundits had left the Massachusetts Senator's candidacy for dead. He was later asked to become a formal volunteer for the online campaign and worked as a moderator on the campaign's blog through the November 2004 election.

Matt considers himself a contemporary Deist and representative of an emerging "secular and spiritual" movement in American politics. This is a segment of the American electorate that is redefining the definition of spiritual in America.

"The Founders and Framers were products of the Enlightenment. They were freethinkers in every sense of the word, committed to the search for truth wherever it might lead. They weren't perfect, and didn't always live up to their ideals. But as human beings go, they were pretty darn remarkable – especially for their time."

"I see myself as also being the product of an Enlightenment tradition – but a twenty-first century, cross-cultural, spiritually-informed Enlightenment tradition, rather than a purely Western intellectual one. The search for truth, even the truth of God, cannot possibly be limited to a single tradition or approach."

"Some people will find God while practicing an organized religion. Some encounter Him while practicing yoga or Qi Gong. Others will experience Her through the study of comparative religion. Still others will glimpse It through a synthesis of the discoveries of evolutionary biology and modern physics. And some will experience their connection to a living, breathing cosmos through a descent into the psyche and embrace of their wholeness and essential humanity."

According to Matt, *"pluralism isn't just an ideal in America, or around the world; it's already a reality. And people who have a problem with pluralism ultimately have a problem with everything the Founders and Framers set out to create."*

This era of conservative backlash has been a trying time for anyone who believes in the virtues of modernity, and the embrace of a sustainable, stable human future. But in the spirit of John Adams and Thomas Paine, Matt urges commitment rather than surrender or appeasement.

"It's time that men and women of conscience, faith, and spirit stopped playing defense, and began taking the fight to the enemies of human freedom and human potential, be they foreign or domestic, political or theological."

Matt's principal role models for political leadership – Mohandas Gandhi, Winston Churchill, and John Adams – mirror his eclectic approach. Refusing to blindly accept anyone's ideology, Matt adheres to Gandhi's tenet that truth exists on all sides of every issue. Consequently, the ideal solution to a conflict will not so much reflect a compromise between the competing sides' positions as an entirely new synthesis that incorporates the fundamental principles that actually motivate each at a core level. He believes that the most efficient approach to moving forward as a nation, and as a species, will inevitably incorporate an appeal to the human center – those core experiences and values which men and women of good will readily acknowledge regardless of race, color, sexual orientation, or creed.

Matt was a founding member of the Democracy Cell Project (an IRS-approved 501C3 spinoff of the Kerry 2004 online campaign), for whom he wrote a Sunday morning column entitled *The Tao of Politics*, in which he explored the intersection of religion, spirituality, and politics. When not digging ever deeper into the cycles of history and the foundations of comparative religion, he is at work on his first two books, ***What God Tells Me: The Confession of a 21st Century American Deist*** and ***The Spiritual Template of America: A Self-Help Book for Our National Life***.