

## Toilet Traumas & the Republican Flush-O-Ramas

Written by Alex Baer

Saturday, 10 November 2012 22:25

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No matter how much we would like it to be so, not every news story in the known world can be about the entire nation bounding off budgetary bluffs and buttes, en masse.

Every once in a while, the news universe requires a massage of more than one or two of the Four Humours. Take the lesser known of these, Potty Humour.

Oh, I know -- but it's been a dreadful week, reeking of stale politics, dank backroom deals, and damp gym shoes from being on the constant run. So, kick back, let your socks air out, and give vent to a short, spleeny foray -- what the hey.

Besides, no matter how rough you think this patch is, just wait until we get back to The Impending Armageddon Doomsday Apocalypse of Falling off the Edge of the Financial World, aka The Great Fiscal Cliff Drop and Souvenir Nose Dive.

By then, of course, you'll be longing to retreat into the restroom for a, uh -- well, a *rest*. So, enjoy this while you can.

Imagine, for example, 1.2 billion people. Now imagine half of them having no lav or loo at home. That's how it is in India, and it leads to people seeking relief in public -- a trend that bands of volunteers are seeking to stem in the western state of Rajasthan.

Four to five citizen *self-enlistees* there, will, at the sight of someone attempting to do the usual private business in public, will "shout, beat drums, or blow a whistle," a district official told the BBC.

That's got to put one's concentration in a tenuous position, one would think. Sounds a bit like African beaters, making a *gawdawful* clamor and racket, trying to drive beasts away, or into the sights of hunters.

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Unfortunately, one man has already been shot in a brawl for answering Nature's call. You might remember a host of unusual stories with such subject matter. Unfortunately, *I* remember them -- these things seek me out. I

*swear*

I do not go out looking for them on purpose.

- Last year, a new Indian bride left her marriage after two days because her home had no facilities.
- On-the-spot fines have been imposed on offenders of about 50 cents -- more than an average day's wage for many Indians.
- In other areas, where defacement of public property can also be shown, the fine jumps to \$23, doubling for repeaters.
- There are toilets that pay their users -- about 12 cents a month.
- There are even toilet heroes who work toward providing public facilities in India, a rarity, leading to the behaviors many are trying to stop.

All this is obviously a boon to public health, whenever any progress is made. It undoubtedly helps tourism and cross-cultural acceptance as well. Of course, judging a culture, using the standards of one's own, is a classic act of ethnocentrism. It's an easy error to make in such areas, where, in the west, there are no lack of facilities, and the availability of such amenities are everywhere taken for granted.

Which is why a \$2,500 fine for a 3-year-old Oklahoman letting go outside seems not only surreal, but a bit stiff. The little guy was outside playing, had to go, and let fly, in the yard. A passing policeman spotted the event, stopped, and wrote the mom a ticket.

The Piedmont (*yes, yes*) police chief and mayor have been flushed and aghast over the ticket, throwing it out, pledging to get to the bottom of things. *Well, stuff happens, right?*

The NPR story even took time to poll its online viewers as to their outdoor relief-and-release behaviors. Of poll takers, only 5% have said they've never engaged in such behavior.

While you're considering that collision of cultural and biological imperatives, from a lack of facilities in India, to what probably seems to many to be a veritable Private Toilet Cult in the

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West, there comes a story that almost no amount of cultural experience might prepare one to easily receive:

- The opening of the world's first toilet theme park.

(Go ahead -- feel free to go back and read that again. We'll wait for you here.)

The world's first toilet park -- sorry, the *Restroom Cultural Park* -- opened in the South Korea city of Suwon. It concerns itself with the various fascinations, arts, and routines, of water-closet-dom.

There are historical displays -- *Toilets Throughout Time*, one might say -- various sculptures, and assorted works of art having *toiletin*  
*g*  
themes.

This is one of those times where even the most knowledgeable, practiced, and culturally open-minded traveller may pause and go, "*What?!*"

Some things, it appears, will forever be destined as barriers between and among cultures. Where such things are done behind closed stall doors only, in other parts of the world, it's a regular free-for-all, we might say in smirking judgment.

Well, all we can offer as a buffer, at this point, is the celebration of a toilet, Western-style -- by making it break a motorized toilet speed record, back in May, going 46 miles an hour.

By anyone's standards, that's going at a pretty good clip, so to say.

(Note to diplomats and scholars: I suspect that, in the West, we'd be much more open to

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cultural curiosities we don't understand if we would simply motorize them. It may be that combustible liquids is the key, versus waste fluids. The burning of fossil fuels, at least, appears to be a wide-open flume route and sluice channel into the Western heart.)

Now, then: We appear to have muddled through that segment relatively unscathed, emerging with dry clothing and shoes from that storm. At this point, it's no doubt a relief for us to be moving onto firmer ground -- The Great, End-of-the-World, Fiscal Precipice Tumble.

And, yes, one could say we are moving from one sludge heap to another and that, if we are not careful, we could all end up not having a pot left to... to cook dinner in. (Sorry -- the Tender-less Blogger's Guild demands once-a-month, mandatory practice of twist endings.)

Speaking of waste: You'll likely remember the utter waste of \$50 million by House Republicans, taking 33 separate votes, trying to repeal the Affordable Care Act -- a milestone in grandstanding and taxpayer dollar abuse by the *millstone* GOP.

Well, that was chump change -- a billionaire's lunch money. Remember the End-of-the-World debt ceiling battle last summer? It was when House Republicans were holding the entire United States, and the world's financial system, hostage -- indulging themselves, playing a game of chicken.

Raising the debt ceiling had been done under many, many Presidents before, and without so much as a passing sign of momentary heartburn. But, that was before Teabagger Madness, and before we had a black man in the White House.

Naturally, Republicans would suddenly not budge. They were willing to let the nation's credit rating take a hit, triggering massive financial slides around the world. *That's one really, really spendy and full-blown, bratty pout, GOP.*

Yes, these were the same Republicans who green-lighted putting a couple wars on the nation's credit card, along with deep tax cuts (at the same time, inexplicably) for the absurdly wealthy, and bank bailouts, and so on. And, yes, these same Republicans were lecturing the country

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about the urgent need and mindful glories of fiscal responsibility.

These are the same Republicans that will endlessly lecture the country on patriotism and acting in the best interests of the country, too. Somehow, they are never called on such hypocrisies -- or, if they are, there is no change, and no differing end result.

OK -- all up to speed. Point being: That debt-ceiling battle cost taxpayers \$1.3 billion, with a "B." Once again -- so much for the fiscal responsibility that Republicans love to tout, while lighting their cigars with fistfuls and boxcars of hundreds.

(It is likely that Fiscal Conservatives are as rare in the Republican Party today as are Moderates, Whigs, and completely sane members. In any case, the last Fiscal GOP Conservative may have briefly appeared in the late 1970s, and immediately gone extinct, ironic payment for having cut an easy deal with opposing members of the House and Senate, regarding funding for something frivolous and unrelated to military spending -- education, maybe.)

So, here we go again. Think anything different will happen this time?

If you do, I congratulate your spirited optimism in the face of overwhelmingly -- crushing, even -- evidence to the contrary. Those who believe we'll go through this same hostage-taking, heart-stopping, spoiled-brat meltdown by Republicans all over again, are welcomed into the Leery Realists' Club, where everyone has been burned at least twice by hope's bonfires.

Members of the LRC will note a zillion different sources for news and updates on this latest round of foot-dragging, chest-beating, and baleful hollering by members in Congress. (A few are listed below.)

Members of the LRC are also urged to contact their representatives and demand a much better showing this time around. Demand far fewer of your tax dollars go up in the needless smoke of Republican politicians' stoking their own self-centered fires, desperate to provide themselves smokescreens for their true motives and behaviors: *Making the country fail, so they'll finally be*

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*put back in charge again!*

And, if one email, call, letter, and visit doesn't immediately do the trick, be prepared to repeat the process daily, and then twice daily, and even more, until a deal is finally reached.

Your alternative is to sit back, tune out, and watch another taxpayer-funded, billion-dollar bonfire climb higher and higher, out of control. Smoke signals, after all, are an ancient form of signaling immediate and dire danger to communities.

I'd be willing to bet you're wishing for one more tale of Potty Humour right about now, rather than thinking about, talking about, and dealing with all this political... *waste*.

Hate to say it. Told you so.

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India's volunteer spotters & beaters: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-20202339>

Shot in a brawl: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/8286326.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8286326.stm)

Fines, when public relief isn't: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/4525333.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4525333.stm)

Pay toilet -- where users are paid: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toilet>

Toilet hero: [http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1924149\\_1924154\\_1924429,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1924149_1924154_1924429,00.html)

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The \$2,500 relief:

<http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2012/11/08/164696041/pee-peegate-3-year-olds-whiz-leads-to-2-500-public-urination-ticket>

Toilet park: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-20258175>

Fast toilet: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-17922900>

Remember this million-dollar waste? <http://newsbusters.org/blogs/brent-baker/2012/07/12/cbs-s-pelley-upset-house-s-obamacare-repeal-votes-have-cost-taxpayers-5>

How about this billion-dollar, taxpayers' back-breaker? <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0712/78863.html>

Clashing again:

<http://www.npr.org/blogs/itsallpolitics/2012/11/09/164815321/deja-vu-all-over-again-obama-and-boehner-clash-on-fiscal-cliff-and-taxes>

Upside to jumping off the cliff:

<http://www.npr.org/blogs/itsallpolitics/2012/11/09/164814369/the-upside-to-plunging-off-the-fiscal-cliff>

Smoke signals: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smoke\\_signal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smoke_signal)