



Not your typical Tea Party

Forget the crumpets and cakes, angry Americans want answers

By [Carla Iacovetti](#) 05/13/2010

“Liberty and order will never be perfectly safe, until a trespass on the constitutional provisions for either, shall be felt with the same keenness that resents an invasion of the dearest rights.” – James Madison, fourth president of the United States

Every generation has had them – protesters in America utilizing their First Amendment rights to speak freely.

In the 1950s, America faced challenges to segregation and saw the rise of Martin Luther King, Jr., who believed that peaceful protesting was a way to be heard. Until that time, segregation was forced in most of the United States; and in the South, it was law. King’s relentless pursuit on behalf of the black community played an enormous part in Congress’s eventual passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1965.

In the ’60s and early ’70s, America experienced the antiwar protests, initiated primarily by college students who were not pleased with the draft increase, and who wanted to be heard. Draft dodging became a problem, while protesters across the country demonstrated their defiance against the war, with hippies advocating the message love not war.

What started out as a message of peaceful existence became a living controversy with repeated outbreaks of violence.

The most violent demonstration brought on by these young draft/war protesters was perhaps the Vietnam War protest held at Kent State University in Ohio in May 1970. Kent State was a catalyst that provoked numerous other aggressive protests held at various university campuses across the states.

Certainly the recent protests surrounding Proposition 8 in 2008 caused the nation to take notice, as supporters of the proposition marched up and down the streets of Hollywood and various surrounding cities in Los Angeles County, declaring, “What do we want? Equality! When do we want it? Now!”

History shows an assiduous opposition between the owners and the working class in a fundamental struggle for power and survival, and while the issues vary, there remains a common thread: Protesting, for whatever reason, is the result of opinion, displeasure, dissent, objection, disapproval, and is usually declared publicly and often directed at some person or institution in power.

There is a need to be heard, and whether one agrees with the opinions of protesters or not, their influences are hard to ignore. Such is the reality of the current Tea Party movement that is spreading across the nation, and Ventura County is no exception — that voice is in crescendo mode.

The Tea Party movement strikes a chord of curiosity as questions arise about its contentions with the current administration. What, precisely, are the issues? Is this a potentially dangerous “right-wing” organization, as some believe it to be?

David Stewart, a software engineer and spokesman for the Ventura County Tea Party says, “This all started with the government forcing the banks into these ridiculous loans. Then there are the federal departments, like the Department of Education, which are huge money drains. There’s just too much federal control. The government feels like they have to be involved in every aspect of our life.”



Many Tea Party movement enthusiasts — there is an estimated 1,500 to 3,000 members in Ventura County — share the belief that freedom is principal, and the love of liberty, not the love of



government,
was the
driving force
behind

America's founders. Men like Thomas Jefferson and the American Revolutionary War hero Gen. John G. Stark (whose toast, "Live free or die: Death is not the worst of evils," became the motto for the state of New Hampshire) valued our divine right to live free. Jefferson's famed quote, written in the Declaration of Independence, is hard to dismiss.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men."

If man-made government is not the end-all and be-all for advocating our rights, but merely a means to assure that every American's rights for freedom are upheld, then should government be a vehicle and not the main objective?

Ventura Tea Party organizer George Miller says, "Government is a leech upon the people, and has used their wealth to grow into a greedy monster that is now sucking up most of the oxygen in the room and stunting the nation's growth."

Initially, the grass-roots movement began with informal meetings protesting high taxes, spending and the government bailouts, but with time, the concerns have broadened and intensified over the last two years; and now there is widespread interest in this group, especially since Glenn Beck and Fox News started talking about it. Today, the Tea Party movement is disquieted about fiscal responsibility, constitutional adherence, the loss of freedoms through too much government control and that \$121 trillion looming over the United States in financial obligations. Fiscal obligations that Miller declares, "We'll never be able to catch up!"

One of the oddities about this so-called movement is that that one person does not drive it, nor does it have an actual list of members or chapters, yet there is a rising concern among fellow Tea Partiers that President Obama has lost touch with the middle class, and according to Republican Congressman Peter T. King, who is serving his ninth term in the U.S. House of Representatives, "Obama has an agenda that he's going to pursue — no matter what."

Naturally, health care is a part of that agenda, and it is a matter of serious concern to Tea Partiers here in Ventura County.

Stewart is convinced that part of the reason this administration is pushing the health care program is to "control resources." He says, "Congress should eat what they cook! Why do they have special treatment, their own set of health care benefits, retirement and receive a full salary for life? I find this extremely offensive!"

There is an age-old saying, "There are two sides to every coin," and there are some who believe this campaign is unsubstantiated and concerning.

What is the president's response to the Tea Party campaign? According to a recent report issued on CNN, the "Tea bagger rallies amuse the president." Obama says, "I think they should be more grateful to me for cutting their taxes."

However, the movement does not amuse some Ventura County residents. Brian Leshon, the Ventura County Democratic Party chairman says, “The Tea Partiers are unrealistic. When these Tea Partiers talk about losing their freedom and [about] fiscal regulations, we did regulate them. We went from the Great Depression to the biggest prosperity we’ve ever had. When Bush deregulated many of the banks and stock markets, we had a crash. We had regulations and we had prosperity; we removed the regulations and we crashed. The Tea Partiers fail to recognize this.”

But many believe there is no longer an incentive to work when half their income is being taken out in taxes. In addition, some say the insurance industry could have been fixed, but the lack of regulations has helped to create a monster.

Miller says, “Give me liberty, not debt!”

“The government created these hard times with the banks forcing the private sector for all of these ridiculous loans! We do need safety nets, but it should stay at the state level,” says Stewart.

No matter what party affiliation one has, it’s hard to imagine that anyone wants higher taxes, more debt and less freedom. The arguments that surround government spending, increased taxation and Constitutional adherence are numerous.

The Tea Party claims that there has been a divergence from upholding the Constitution, which was established to protect the rights of every American. Is it an actual departure from Constitutional adherence or an abandonment of the values established in the Constitution? Certainly times have changed, and some things that were not tolerated in society back in the 1700s, are accepted today.

Ventura County criminal Attorney Ken Amirian of Krupnick & Krupnick says that there are a couple of theories on constitutionality. “We have originalists and textualists. Originalists adhere to the Constitution like a decree, giving the Constitution the meaning that its words were understood to bear at the time they were written, and it does not vary.

Textualists don’t focus so much on the intent, but take the words and focus on the ideals.”

In a sense, it is similar to those who take the Bible literally, or simply adhere to the ideals and principles and hold to the belief that it’s inspired but not literal.

Stewart spoke candidly about the judicial process, and the notion that the Constitution is not a “living document,” but something that bends and adapts with the times, as being “very offensive to him and the way our forefathers thought.”

Judicial theorists have debated constitutional interpretation and adaptation since its conception, and the issue of constitutional adherence is nothing new under the sun. In an essay written for the publication *The Progressive Conservative, U.S.A.*, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia says, “What do you think your judges are doing when they interpret the Constitution? It’s sad to tell you that, after 200 years, there is no agreement on this rather fundamental question: What is the purpose of the enterprise of judicial interpretation?”

With a 200-year debate legacy, one can only wonder if this question will actually ever be answered. Perhaps part of the problem surrounds the word interpretation. Since interpretation is expounding and subjective, can

it really ever be black and white? Can it ever be so resolute?

Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson, a longtime Republican, discusses the Tea Party movement. “Things are not as simple, and things are not as black and white as many of those folks on the Tea Party side think they should be. As a legislator or anyone elected in office, you are not presented with black and white choices. It’s not that way. You are presented with a certain choice and you have to make the best one you can, and you have to move the ball in the best direction, and that might be done by hitting a single or double as opposed to a home run.”

Dr. Daniel B. Lee, an associate professor of sociology at California State University, Channel Islands, has spent extensive time studying protests, and believes that protest movements operate within the medium of fear.

Lee maintains that, “Protest communication makes sense only in its terms of an underlying distinction.” He believes that the Tea Party movement actually doesn’t have a clear program or issue, which is both a weakness and strength.

The restlessness that is currently prevalent in our nation will undoubtedly draw members, however, “Protest movements operate within the medium of fear. Fear motivates or mobilizes individuals to join movements. Considering current economic and political conditions, many people are anxious and willing to turn to any alternative to the status quo, even one that is as undefined as the Tea Party. The test for the Tea Party will be to see how clearly it can state its own program and still attract enough followers.”

In his recent essay *The Trouble With Elitists Theories*, world-renowned historian and author Victor Davis Hanson wrote, “There is an unfocused but growing anger in the country — and it should come as no surprise. Nobody likes to be lectured by those claiming superior wisdom but often lacking common sense about everything from out-of-control spending and predicting the weather to dealing with enemies who are trying to kill us all.”

With a \$30 trillion deficit, inflation compounded over the last 30 years, unemployment at an all-time high since the Great Depression, the health insurance monster, increased taxation, a lethargic economy and out-of-control spending by Congress, clearly something is amiss. There is a rising frustration felt by Republicans, Independents and Democrats across the country over the issues at hand. While protesting may not be your cup of tea, ignorance is never bliss. In a time of so much diversity, one can only hope that every American who values freedom and the right to equality will examine the facts, and then choose wisely.

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Comments

Very well written article. I would have added this from:

Shelby Foote, notable historian of the Civil War, didn't believe that government "of and by and for the people" (a republic) would have perished from the earth if our beloved President Lincoln wasn't "totally ruthless" when he was willing to slaughter 620,000 Americans to end our right of self determination and we became "The vilest form of government there is, a democracy", Thomas Paine.

But still a good commentary on the "tea" party movement.

posted by **theresashep** on 5/13/10 @ 11:30 a.m.

Thank you thesashep! Excellent quote by Thomas Paine. I appreciate your input.

posted by **WriterAtTheSea** on 5/13/10 @ 11:37 a.m.

Thank you thesashep. An excellent quote by Thomas Paine. Your input is appreciated.

posted by **WriterAtTheSea** on 5/13/10 @ 11:40 a.m.

Thank you for a great article. I appreciate the work that went into the research for this paper. As for a comment I would like to address Obama's disrespect for the American citizen that is willing to take a stand on what he believes. How can we look up to a man when he is constantly looking down on us?

Also In the old testament we are directed to "the plum line" (Jesus) for a solid foundation that is level and straight. We have a solid starting point. That is what we as a people have in the Constitution. A solid and dependable starting point. I believe this administration has successfully disregarded the constitution and is now in the midst of trashing our freedoms.

posted by **sweetbabylou** on 5/13/10 @ 12:12 p.m.

Thank you for your note sweetbabylou, and for your appreciation of my work and research. One of the beauties of this nation is our right to stand up and speak freely, and while I did not personally appreciate the remark President Obama made, he too has a right to speak freely. On the other hand, as a leader, it might be wise to not share quite so flippantly.

Part of what I tried to point out in my article is the difference in how the Constitution is interpreted. Much like the Bible, it is often taken between two extremes of thought, and I am not sure that can ever really work. The Constitution is the starting point, and I doubt anyone in government or our judicial platform would ever disagree with that fact, but it does seem there is a lot of controversy about "interpretation."

VCF's editor Michael Sullivan also has some very insightful things to say about this movement in her editorial. She quotes Ventura Councilman, Neil Andrews as he gives his perspective as to what this movement "should" represent, and disrespect, no matter in what form, or from "whoever" just should not happen.

Thanks again.

posted by **WriterAtTheSea** on 5/13/10 @ 01:40 p.m.

To equate the gun-loving hate-filled tea party movement with the Vietnam anti-war protests is absurd. The violence at Kent State in 1970 was primarily from the National Guard shooting unarmed citizens. Of course the solution isn't for people to arm themselves as the government has better weapons. Just ask MOVE's Ramona Africa, who survived the 1985 bombing of her Philadelphia home with C4, where 11 men women and children died facing 10,000 rounds of police gunfire and the deliberately unchecked burning of 65 homes.

I have sympathy for some of the tea party's concerns, but they confuse fascism with socialism and illogically cast blame solely on those who might help them, rather than on those who have harmed them and our world. The Democrats may have been rented, but today's Republican politicians are bought and paid for. Don't forget, the original Boston Tea Party'ers opposed not just the British government, but the corporate monopolistic East India Trading Company.

posted by **WildLaw** on 5/14/10 @ 12:54 p.m.

Tell that ignorant woman wearing the "GLOBAL WARMING IS A FASCIST HOAX" shirt to research what global warming really is, instead of wearing propagandist crap.

She looks just as bad as the left wing nut jobs who argue, fight the opposition (for whatever reason I'm at a loss), and accomplish absolutely nothing.

Global warming is caused by earth's 26,000 "top like" rotation. It's called the precession of the equinoxes and it controls the seasons around the globe.

It's also called the great year. Over (through?) 'time', as the precession progresses, summers WILL become longer or shorter depending on your location on the earth. Conversely, Winters WILL become longer or shorter on the opposite hemisphere.

We are completing one of these cycles now. That's why the climate is changing. No go tell your lying politicians (left and right) to tell people of the world the truth.

Of course you may not notice it on a daily basis but over time you will see the evidence.

<http://www-istp.gsfc.nasa.gov/stargaze/S...>

<http://www.precessionoftheequinoxes.com/...>

<http://ancientegypt.hypermart.net/royala...>

No wonder why governments are trying to secure land across the globe. HMM

posted by **PaganPride** on 5/14/10 @ 02:19 p.m.

Man-made GLOBAL average WARMING is real. Climate scientists, the Left, Centrists, and Conservatives (UK) all agree. Only the Right (US) and some far lefties who have circled back to the right disagree. Precession of the earth is but one factor (according to the NASA link I followed) affecting climactic trends. We are performing a massive experiment upon our atmosphere and oceans, pumping incredible quantities of Green House Gases into the air and sea, ignoring the data showing catastrophic consequences, surviving today's greater weather catastrophes, and hoping that we won't see unbearable damage in our lifetime. Too

much talk about what will happen by the end of this century makes Climate Change seem irrelevant to us. After all, we'll be dead by then and our kids can try deal with it AND suffer our consequences.

posted by **WildLaw** on 5/14/10 @ 07:28 p.m.

A couple figures would benefit from a fact checker and/or editor has been misplaced:

\$121 trillion debt should instead be about \$12.3 trillion.

\$30 trillion deficit should be \$1.8 trillion.

Good points of comparison:

The total GDP of the United States is about \$14.43.

The GWP, or gross world product, is about \$60 trillion.

PaganPride, the precession of equinoxes doesn't account for our current global warming. They call it 'global warming' because there's a rise in mean temperatures around the entire world, irrespective of hemisphere. This means that, regardless of where we are on the cycle of the precession of equinoxes, the summers are a little more warm and winters are a little warmer, too.

As this is a 26,000 year cycle, it fails to explain in any case why we've seen such an acute spike in global temperature data in the past 100 years. 26,000 years makes for very slow, gradual change. The precession is not a short-term process, and the debate over its effects on climate change is concerned with its role in the wax and wane of ice ages over tens to hundreds of thousands of years. Until we've radically increased the human lifespan, nobody will be individually capable of perceiving the effects of this process during his or her lifetime.

I've read your links and none of them support the claim of the precession being responsible for our current warming problems.

See also:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milankovitch_cycles

http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/paleo/milankovitch_cycles

Getting back to the article at hand, can someone please explain what the Tea Partiers are referring to specifically when they make claims about the Obama administration's departure from or disregard or abandonment of the Constitution? Could someone please explain which freedoms are being taken away?

Where were the Tea Party people throughout the Bush administration when he was running yearly deficits and curtailing liberties in the name of national security?

It's also worth noting that Victor Davis Hanson is a *military* historian and neoconservative commentator, and that "The Trouble With Elitist Theories" was published February 11, 2010, in his syndicated column with Tribune Media Services and in National Review.

posted by **Multitudes** on 5/14/10 @ 08:24 p.m.

Additional thoughts...

My use of other protest movements--to include the Kent State riots were only to show that protesting has been common place in this country throughout history. For whatever reason, violent or passive; they occur when people are displeased with government and/or a leaders decisions, etc. This was not by any means meant to be an equivalent to.

While Victor Davis Hanson is an awarded "military" history, but that is only the beginning. The recipient of the National Humanities Medal in 2007 and the Bradley Prize in 2008, also the author of hundreds of articles, book reviews, scholarly papers, newspaper editorials on subjects ranging from ancient Greek, agrarian and military history to foreign affairs, domestic politics, and contemporary culture. In addition to his expertise in military history, Hanson is an awarded Greek and Latin scholar, and with his understanding of both U.S. military history and world history, his perspective of humanity and government as related to history is insightful.

Wikipedia, though convenient is not considered a reliable source. Ask any college professor. Most will not allow students to reference it in any critical essay, because it is not considered trustworthy.

For further info about the Tea Party, and their issues with this current administration, here is the link to their website. <http://venturacountyteaparty.ning.com/>

posted by **WriterAtTheSea** on 5/17/10 @ 08:33 a.m.

In response to my article, I received the following email from a local man who had trouble posting his comment, and so I am posting it here on his behalf.

MY STORY

In regards to the article on the Ventura Tea Party, I wanted to give my point of view. I attended a Tea Party in another location that day, as well as the one in Santa Barbara the month before. Both were extremely cordial and we left the place immaculate. I think the essence of the tea party concerns, at least for me, were spoken by Milton Friedman, when he said that when you put freedom before equality, you get both. And when you put equality before freedom you get neither. Unfortunately, in this age of political correctness, we have just the opposite. And that discrepancy is embodied by Obama more than anyone. I define political correctness as the social phenomenon which emphasizes a double standard in proficiency and conduct between what is usually considered the dominant conservative view in our country and the minority/ victim/ other category.

The healthcare bill, which Obama has forced on us, is a perfect example of this double standard. First, here is my story. I was born and raised here in California. I have been in the workforce and thus paying taxes for 25 years. I am also a veteran of two foreign wars. And, as a paramedic, I am at the absolute tip of the spear when it comes to providing universal health care. I do not have health care insurance. I dropped my benefits in September, 2008 right when Barack Obama declared health care a right. Almost every day I treat and transport people who do not need an ambulance ride to the hospital, or people who were not born in this country, never worked a day in their life in the U.S. and yet, when I get their billing information at the hospital, they have Medicare and Medical. How is that? How is it that the President can tell a tax-paying citizen, who is a veteran and works in health care, that health care insurance is a requirement for me, but a right for others, including non-U.S. citizens? And, if I do not comply, I will be fined and thrown in jail. If that happens, I hope the IRS does it while I am on duty, so people can see how absurd all of this has

become. I can just see the IRS putting my ambulance out of service to arrest me, just before another 911 call goes out.

(Continued)

posted by **WriterAtTheSea** on 5/17/10 @ 01:46 p.m.

(Will Selling Continued)

I have never asked much of our country, and certainly not for anything which I was not willing to do my part. But, I attended the Tea Parties because of a fundamental respect and appreciation for the U.S. Constitution and the healthy balance it has provided between social cohesion and individual rights. Ironically, though, those rights are being eroded by people in our government who live the high life and know nothing about hard work, paying dues, or the true price of freedom. It is my belief that this health care bill violates the following amendments:

Article Eight: Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted. President Obama wants to put me in jail for not buying health care insurance, yet gives it to others for free?

Article Nine: The enumeration in the Constitution of certain rights shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people. President Obama has already demonstrated the absurdity of this double standard, where it is free for some and required by others, at their expense.

Article Ten: The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people. Congress does not have the right to regulate me or my health, as though I were just a commodity. I am not just a piece of meat. I am a paramedic; I am a veteran; I am a natural born U.S. citizen.

Finally, as a note, our Commander-in-Chief never paid his dues in the military. Instead, he led the entitled/ elitist life by going to college and then to an Ivy League law school without ever paying his dues. And, as a veteran of Desert Storm, I can say I have been to the birthplace of Islam-Saudi Arabia—and can say it is the most intolerant place on earth, which is in direct contrast to what his supporters of diversity and equality supposedly espouse, once again exposing the hypocrisy of his administration and political correctness in general. And, to see him bow to the King of Saudi Arabia shows he has no backbone, literally or figuratively, to stand up to true intolerance.

Sincerely,

Will Selling

posted by **WriterAtTheSea** on 5/17/10 @ 01:46 p.m.

I agree that spending almost half our income to taxes makes me lose my incentive to work but what people don't understand about healthcare reform and the single-payer option is that groups like the California Nurses Association and Healthcare Now propose that the government would pay the private entities for our care. We would continue with private healthcare practitioners but we would cut out the middleman (insurance companies). Insurance companies boasted a 2 billion dollar profit this quarter alone by raising our

premiums and deductibles. Yet we rank 38 in mortality rates against other industrialized countries. Our delivery of care goes unregulated and driven by greed. I'd much rather have a public payer option than this mess we are in now.

Here's to our health,
Rita Batchley RN
Ventura County Medical Center

posted by **thenursesnurse** on 5/17/10 @ 03:28 p.m.

Respectfully, even if you're in the top tax bracket your tax rate won't be almost half your income. The average tax rate for Americans is 18%, the lowest it's been since the 1940s.

- <http://www.weathersealed.com/wp-content/...>
- <http://www.taxpolicycenter.org/publicati...>
- <http://www.taxpolicycenter.org/briefing-...>
- <http://www.taxfoundation.org/publication...>

And those tax rates **must** be raised (in addition to intelligent spending cuts) if we ever expect to clean up our national debt issues.

Beyond that, though, I agree that a smart single-payer/universal care system should be the goal of the American health care system.

posted by **Multitudes** on 5/19/10 @ 08:42 p.m.

Post A Comment

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