

## Five Stages of Grief

I'm [Adam Klugman](#) and you are listening to [AM 620 KPOJ](#), Portland's only Progressive Talk Station. The numbers here are 1-866-452-060, (503) 248-0620 or #620 on your AT&T wireless phone.

There are days when it just seems that this country has completely lost its mind. I'm looking at a story here about how Tea Baggers In Florida have their panties in a bunch because U.S. Fish and wildlife want to put restriction on boating to save the last 500 Manatees left on the planet. Their reasoning?

"We cannot elevate nature above people," Citrus County Tea Party Patriots leader [Edna Mattos](#) told the paper. "That's against the Bible and the Bill of Rights."

What do you say to that? How do you reason with people who believe that the bible gives them special boating privileges over creatures older than humans?. And it's gone beyond just crazy or stupid or irrational anymore, it's become terminal. I think we kept hoping that someday soon this sick, self-centered brand of pseudo-religious, mock-proletariat Tea Party cancer would recede and the good, sane, loving Americans would regain their conscience again. But it didn't. Because it is like a cancer, this smallness, this primordial selfishness that is permeating every aspect of our society. And I've been thinking of it that way lately, like the sane, proud, beautiful America has a terminal disease and that we are all in the stages of grief.

Remember that? [Elizabeth Kubler Ross's](#) stages of grief. The first stage is Denial, then Anger, then Bargaining, then Depression, then finally Acceptance.

I remember when [George W. Bush](#) was running for office, a friend of mine told me he was going to win. And I emphatically, rabidly told him that Americans were just not that stupid. I said that he needs to stop even thinking that way because it wasn't possible. It simply wasn't possible.

That was stage 1: Denial

Well, after [George W. Bush](#) stole the election, I changed my life. For me, it was galvanizing, it was an all hands on deck moment, and so I stopped working in advertising and started working in politics because I felt that the very life of our country was at stake, that America had a neo-con cancer growing in the blood of its people and I was mad as hell and I wasn't going to take it. Not from a clown like W, not from a monster like [Dick Cheney](#), not from the money-addicted madmen of wall street, not from the over privileged skull and bones, illuminati cowards who fear democracy and have contempt the people this republic was initiated to serve. No, no, no, no! Not on my watch, dammit. Not on my watch! And there were lots of us, and we organized and we protested and we started websites and fought the power and in 2006, we took back the house in a sweep of righteous indignation that promised to turn things around. No rich kid punk from Texas was going to destroy our country, dammit. We showed them. Bastards. They'll pay for their crimes. Justice will be served.

That was stage 2: Anger

Then, [Nancy Pelosi](#) came in as majority leader and took impeachment off the table. Okay, that wasn't a good sign, but we still had majorities in both houses and W was on his way out and the republicans had no one but Grumpy [McCain](#) to console them and we had... [OBAMA!](#) The man with hope in his pockets and change on his lips, and even though the

democratic party wasn't all we hoped it could, we could still turn things around, we could push the reset button on the 20th century and restore the soul of our people and this nation because we needed to believe that we could.

Please God, let us take back our country and the world back and we'll be better citizens, we promise. We'll never become complacent again. We know Obama isn't perfect, we know he's talking about clean coal and nuclear energy and escalating [War in Afghanistan](#) and voting for warrantless wiretapping, but we can help him be the president he wants to be, the office will make the man, and the people will help him, we promise, if you will only place the wind at his back, if you will only bolster his courage to stand for a truly new century. Please God, we just need a little help. Just a little.

That was stage 3. Bargaining.

Okay. Wait a minute. What's with all the Wall Streeters in your cabinet? I thought you weren't going to hire lobbyists? And you're bailing them out? For how much? But aren't these the same people who stole a bunch of money and then ran the entire economy into a tree? Okay. You're the President, I trust you baby. You want to keep the world economy from melting down. I'm with you. Let's move on. I bet you're going to close [Guantanamo](#). No? Okay. Health Care. Great! This is gonna be good. Public option... sounds good. Tell me more. Okay, so it that leaves all the same, nasty folks in control of a for profit healthcare system that lets 47,000 people die each year...tell me how that's a good thing. I'm all ears. Competition? Hmmm. And now you want to take the public option out of the bill...You mean...all we get is the home version of health care reform. I'm going to go outside and get some air.

Okay. It's a little better out here. Winning the [Lily Ledbetter](#) case is a good thing. Opened up the [Freedom of Information office](#). Like it...We're dabbling in a little alternative energy. You do know the planet is melting. Good. I'm just checking. Don't ask Don't tell, this should be a slam dunk, except that the Republicans manage to squeeze a tax cut for rich people and a 2 percent reduction in social security out of the deal. All for doing the right thing. Mr. President, with all due respect, you're a terrible negotiator. And its getting cold anyway, so I'm going to go back inside.

Hold on. What the hell just happened. I walk back inside for a minute and we're attacking Libya. Well, be sure to notify Congress, War Powers act and all of that. Oh, you don't need to seek authorization from Congress? What about the Constitution and all of that, where only Congress has the power declare war? Oh this is a different kind of power? I see. And you got it as a gift...from [George W. Bush](#) ...how nice of him. But it wasn't really his to give to you, so we'd like it back. And while were on the subject of abuse of power? What's up with this [Bradley Manning](#) person you've got locked up? He's being imprisoned, and quite possibly tortured, indefinitely without a trial in sight. He'd like his civil right backs while you're up..

Man this was supposed to be a great party? What happened? Why do I feel so lousy? I mean it could be a whole lot worse. Bush was a whole lot worse. I mean just not seeing his face or hearing his voice on television was worth the price of admission. But still... there's this nagging feeling.

And now it's election time again and I just can't get it up for you

Could use quite a bit more that to tell you the truth, Mr. President.

Little did we know that it would be followed by the very first gesture to big energy was to guarantee loans to nuclear power and grant leases to oil companies to drill off the coast of the entire southeastern shoreline.

So now you're taking the public option out? Really? Well then what are we talking about here? I don't even want to know. What's next? Okay... tax cuts for the rich and that we would remember the dream of America as an imperfect world leader for peace and justice and innovation and that we would all remember that we care about each other and the earth and the future enough to abandon our individual self-interest in favor of building a society that works for as many people as possible.

For a while, it seemed like Obama was going to inspire that in America. I mean when he talked about hope, wasn't that you were thinking? That he was going to help America wake up from the neo-con nightmare of endless war and market fundamentalism and undo a society being engineered for the wealthiest, most powerful among us? Wasn't that the change he promised? I don't know if I ever fully believed him, but man I wanted to. I really wanted to.

And I don't mean to bring it all down on President Obama because he's just one man fighting an oligarchy that treats the President like an emissary of their business

to the point where we have to ask ourselves, is it over? Has the American experiment failed?

And I get up here on my little microphone and rail against our so-called leaders, most of who are small people, political hacks hypnotized by power and more interested in money than people. Now I say most of them because here in Oregon, we're pretty lucky. We've got national people like Congressman [Peter DeFazio](#) and Senator [Jeff Merkely](#) who manage to muster a backbone now and again but they can only do so much in the face of an American political system that has betrayed itself, its founding principles and it's people.

And it's easy to blame politicians because they are either so utterly corrupt or so completely irrelevant at this point that even the good ones I mentioned can't be expected to hold back the dam with their index finger as it comes crashing down around them. And it is crashing down, folks. We are losing this battle for our democracy. And there are days when it makes me Mad as Hell, but there are also days when I feel the need to respond with something other than outrage. I mean, I really believe the change starts when we get mad as hell and are able to formulate a creative response

We'll be right back.

You're listening to "[Mad as Hell in America](#)," with [Adam Klugman](#) on [KPOJ](#).

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