

# Iran, the Youth Vote, Obama and Teacher Strikes

Some welcome good news from Iran for a change. Over the weekend, their courts acquitted and released Christian pastor **Youcef Nadarkhan**. Three years ago he was charged with apostasy for converting Muslims to Christianity. He was sentenced to death. But that outrage sparked such an international outpouring of pressure and condemnation that he's finally been freed.

The question is, will international pressure ever work on Iran in other ways? Canada's had enough: They just severed ties with Iran, ordered their own diplomats out of Iran and gave Iranian diplomats five days to vacate Canada.

Their foreign minister issued a statement saying that Canada can no longer maintain a diplomatic relationship with a nation that refuses to comply with U.N. resolutions pertaining to its nuclear program; that routinely threatens the existence of Israel; that engages in racist anti-Semitic rhetoric and incitement to genocide; that is among the world's worst violators of human rights; and that shelters and materially supports terrorist groups. And can you imagine just how nasty a place has to be to make a Canadian diplomat say something *that* blunt?

## No Thanks, I'm Good

If President Obama is hoping to fire up the youth vote, he'd better hope they don't read the news. Friday's jobs report showed that as bad as things are in general, they're even worse for young workers. The unemployment rate for 16-to-19-year-olds jumped nearly a full point in August, to 24.6 percent. And for 20-to-24-year-old, it rose to 13.9 percent.

Apparently, the only thing keeping young people's hopes up

these days is their illusions. A new survey by TD Ameritrade found that nearly 40 percent of members of Generation Z, those aged 13 to 22, still expect to receive an inheritance. Reality check: With this economy, only 16 percent of parents think they'll have anything to leave their children. Their kids' only hope of an inheritance is if their parents die before they exhaust what little savings they have. So if your kids offer to help you down those steep stairs, just say, "No, thanks ... I'm good."

### **Sugar High**

Some polls are showing **President Obama** got a modest bump from the convention and is slightly back in the lead. That has some conservative pundits despairing. It makes me wonder how they'd survive if they ever had to actually run for office! Polls may be useful, but they're basically just indicators of what a random group of people thought last week. Even then, they can be skewed in all sorts of ways.

Romney's pollster Neil Newhouse even felt the need to quell their panic by reminding them that the current polls reflect a "sugar high" from the convention. Most don't even include the crash the next day, when the abysmal jobs numbers for August were released. Before you decide the election is over based on September polls, remember that coming out of the 1988 Democratic convention, Gallup showed an insurmountable 17-point lead for that great former presidential candidate, Michael Dukakis.

### **Business As Usual**

Monday, Chicago teachers went on strike. But maybe they should have brushed up on their math instead. Chicago teachers already average over \$76,000 a year, compared to about \$40,000 for an average Chicago family. Yet 79 percent of 8th graders aren't proficient in reading, and only 55 percent even graduate. Despite a looming budget shortfall of \$3 billion, the school district offered them a 16 percent raise.

But they want 30 percent, and they reject a proposed merit pay system. No wonder. Ironically, Mayor Rahm Emanuel went straight from the Democratic Convention, a celebration of public worker unions, to playing hardball with the teachers. Some Chicago schools are staying open to dispense free meals but no education. Some call that business as usual. Meanwhile, 400,000 students are without supervision, so guess who's stepping in to help? Churches.