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Obama's popularity soars

## Opposing views on Obama and future of the country split Ohio community



**View Photo Gallery** — A community divided over the president: In rural Ohio, co-workers at a factory have become encamped into groups over divided views toward Obama and the country.

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By Eli Saslow, Published: January 19

FREMONT, Ohio — On the same day, in the same county of northern Ohio, two new grandparents prepared to drive to the same factory for work. They had started their careers at Arm & Hammer the same year, and for more than two decades, they had stood together on a concrete floor and watched baking soda roll down an 80-foot production line. But, on this morning, what they saw looked nothing alike.

Bill Herr, 61, left a house that had declined in value by 20 percent, in a neighborhood blemished by foreclosures, in a town where he believed the economy for the middle class was "falling apart." He said goodbye to a wife who was recovering from open-heart surgery, which she blamed in small part on the stress and disappointment of the presidential election. He grabbed a coat purchased for \$6 at Goodwill and walked out a front door where he had recently hung a sign created by a local Christian motorcycle group: "AMERICA NEEDS GOD'S HELP! PRAYER OUR ONLY HOPE."

Cathy Morris, 53, left a home she had bought with the help of a middle-class tax break and then drove by the mailbox where she sent regular \$25 checks to President Obama. She passed through a town that she believed was "almost back" and pulled into an Arm & Hammer factory where orders

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inauguration? If so, what motivates you: patriotism, a personal connection or something else? Share with us the story of why you are coming.

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### Obama's inauguration, then and now



JAN 22 Washington Post photographers revisit scenes from President Obama's first inauguration to see how this year compares.

### Inauguration 2013: Explore the scene



JAN 22 Explore this interactive gigapixel panorama of the area outside the Capitol. Tag yourself and others.

had increased by 5 percent and management was once again hiring. "Obama," she said. "Thank goodness."

This is the America that Obama will govern in his second term: A place divided not only by ideology, race and class but also by the very perception of reality. Four years since Obama first took office, is the country better or worse off? Safer or more at risk? Principled or desperately lost?

Here in Fremont, as in much of America, it all depends on whom you ask. In this rural, Rust Belt county where Obama won exactly 50 percent of the vote, located in a state where he won 50 percent, residents expect Obama to either ruin the country or rescue it. The president who spoke ambitiously at his first inauguration about uniting America instead arrives at his second with the country further divided. Fourteen percent of Republicans think he's doing a good job, compared with 88 percent of Democrats. The goal is no longer to effect sweeping conciliation so much as to find fractional compromise in a diminishing common ground.

Inside an Arm & Hammer factory that billows smoke across the farmlands of Ohio, 180 employees now self-segregate into what Morris calls "ideological islands." Co-workers who were once moderate Democrats or Republicans shifted fully to their sides over the past four years, intensifying the disconnect.

There are free copies of a National Rifle Association monthly magazine in one break room and, as of late last year, a life-size cardboard cutout of Obama in the other. There are workers who share copies of Obama's biography, "Dreams From My Father," and others who distribute the movie-version parody, "Dreams From My Real Father: A Story of Reds and Deception."

And then there are Morris and Herr, two longtime employees working side by side, each anticipating Obama's second inauguration as a seminal moment.

Continued 1 2 3 Next Page

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XYZPDQ wrote:

1/22/2013 2:01 PM EST

"the 37-year-old son with a doctorate who had been forced to move back in with them for six months after losing his job as a counselor in Toledo."




1. Who gets doctorates these days? Other than for academics climbing the ladder, it's a worthless degree.


2. Let me guess: the son's many degrees were most likely obtained at taxpayer-subsidied colleges, with taxpayer-subsidized federal loans.

And of course, Bill Herr is only 3 and half years from unlimited HEAVLY government-subsidized Medicare to cover his medical costs until the day he dies.

This is why the tea party schtick gets old.

 **dnice1** wrote:  
1/21/2013 1:46 AM EST

The right-wing propaganda system has certainly done an effective job making lots of Americans hate the president and spreading considerable misinformation about all sorts of issues and people.

 **Middlin** responds:  
1/21/2013 9:11 AM EST

The conservatives have a number of good points to make, such as "wouldn't it be nice if we could give subsidized healthcare to everyone, and not worry about where the money is coming from?" but they drown out their good points with the BS they attempt to use to back up their points. That denigrates their message to the point where no one believes them anymore.

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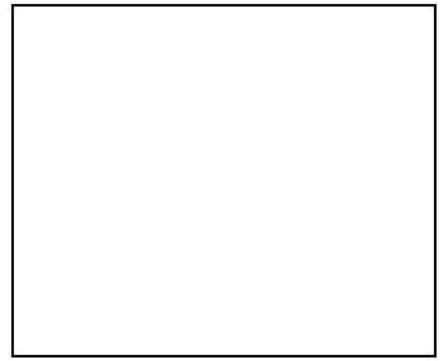
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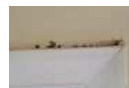
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