

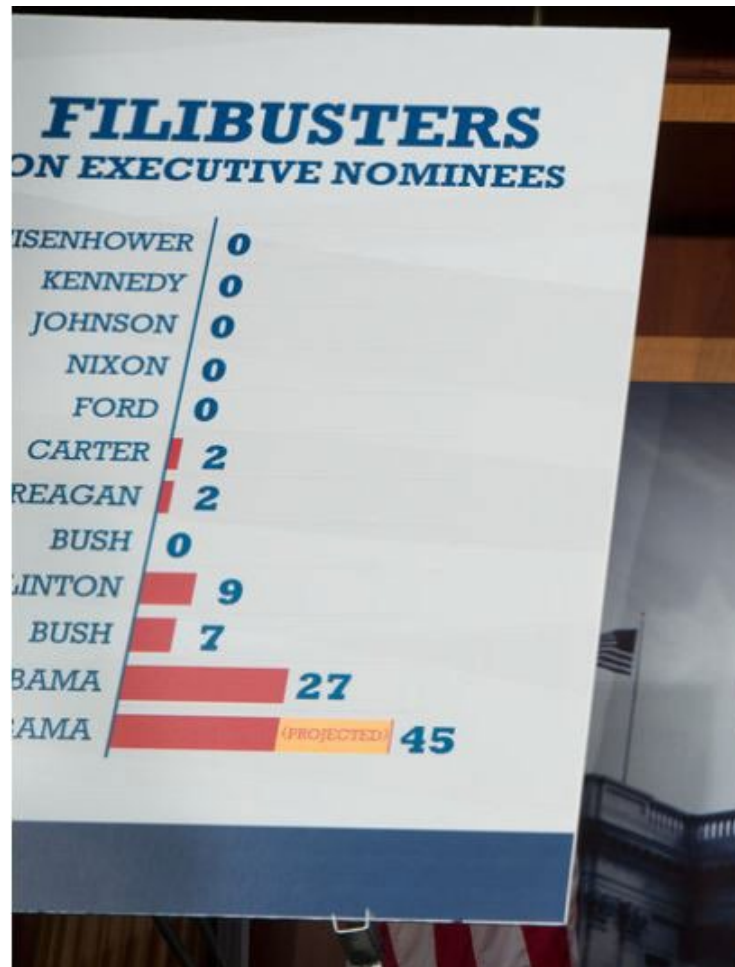
Issues in Alpha House

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Filibusters 2013

- **March 6, 2013:**
 - **Rand Paul filibuster nomination of John Brennan for CIA director.**
 - Use of drones on U.S. citizens.
- **March 24, 2013:**
 - **Rand Paul filibusters against use of drones on U.S. citizens.**
 - Talks for 13 hours to get Atty. General Holder to say that he would not use drones to kill non-combatant American citizens on American soil.
- **Sept 27, 2013:**
 - **Ted Cruz filibusters against Obamacare.**
 - Stopgap spending bill, which includes funding for Affordable Care Act.
 - Reads from Dr. Seuss.
 - Filibuster defeated by bipartisan 79-19 cloture vote.
- **Nov 21, 2013:**
 - **U.S. Senate votes 52-48 to limit the use of filibusters.**
 - Cut off debate on executive nominations with simple majority.

Filibusters



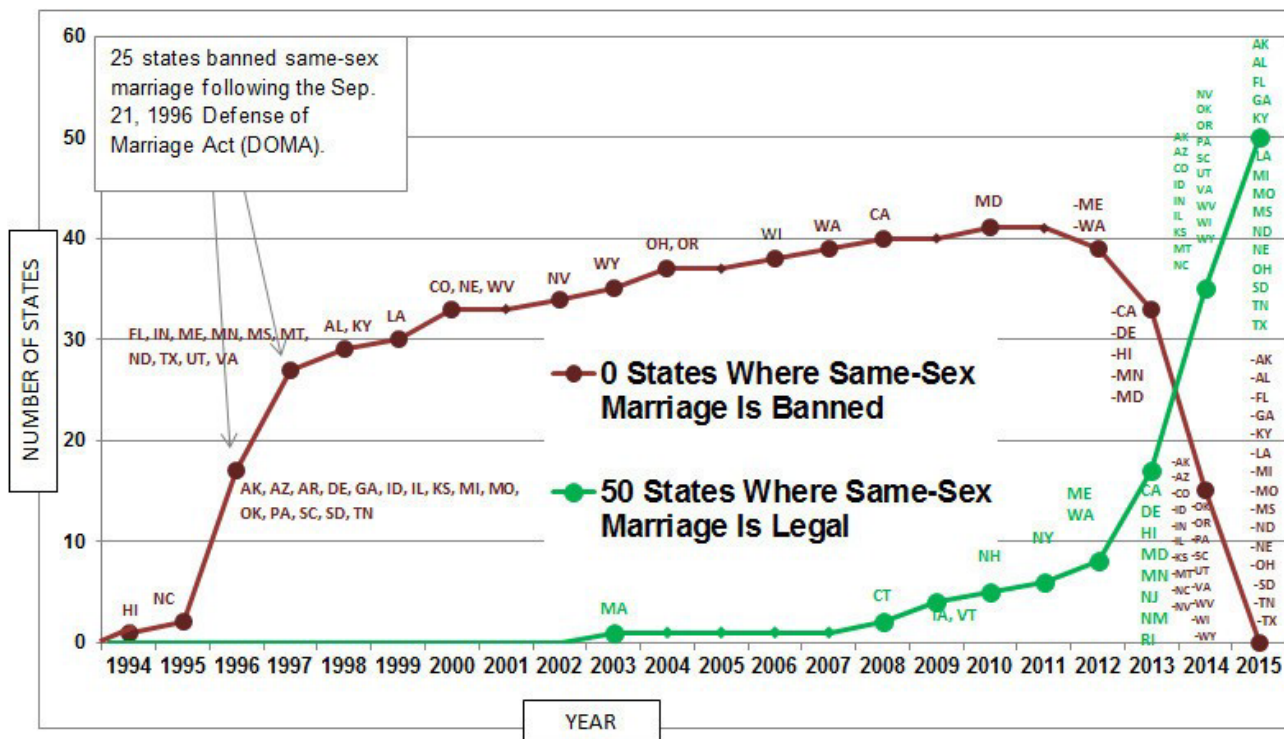
Afghanistan

- **U.S. invaded Afghanistan in “Operation Enduring Freedom”**
 - October 2001 – September 2014
 - Response to 9/11 attack in NYC
 - Removed the Taliban from power
 - Installed Karzai government
- **Karzai formally elected in 2004**
- **2006: U.S. institutes “Clear and Hold” operations along with “nation-building” projects to win the “hearts and minds”**
- **May 2, 2011: U.S. Navy seals kill Osama bin Laden** in nearby Pakistan.
- **2005 to 2014: Garry Trudeau’s website hosts “The Sandbox”**
 - Posts of over 800 letters of U.S. troops from Afghanistan
- **Late 2011: National Front of Afghanistan** created by Ahmad Zia Massoud, former VP of Karzai government, aimed at including Taliban in discussions of reconciliation.
 - **2012: National Coalition of Afghanistan** led by Abdullah Abdullah became the main democratic opposition movement in the Afghan parliament
- **Spring 2013: U.S. forces begin gradual strategic withdrawal from Afghanistan.**
 - 10,000 U.S. troops remain in Afghanistan today. Scheduled for full withdrawal by end of 2016.

Homophobia

- Feb. 28, 1994: **“Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT)**
 - military policy enacted by Clinton administration.
 - Barred discrimination against closeted homosexuals, but still banned open homosexuals from the military
 - July 6, 2011: DADT ended. Openly homosexual military personnel were allowed to continue serving.
- Sept. 21, 1996: **U.S. “Defense of Marriage Act” (DOMA)**
 - allowed states to refuse to recognize same-sex marriages. Defines marriage as heterosexual union of one man and one woman.
 - Death benefits, hospital visiting rights of gay couples affected.
- May 17, 2004: **Massachusetts recognizes gay marriages.**
 - Goodridge v. Department of Public Health
- Feb. 23, 2011: **Obama instructs Department of Justice not to pursue or defend DOMA cases.**
- March 4, 2011: **Speaker John Boehner steers vote for Congress to enforce DOMA through committee.**
- June 23, 2015: **U.S. Supreme Court strikes down DOMA section 3 definition of marriage**
- June 26, 2015: **U.S. Supreme Court rules that gay marriages are legal in all 50 states.**
 - Obergefell v. Hodges
 - *The fundamental right to marry is guaranteed to same-sex couples by both the Due Process Clause and the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.*

Same-Sex Marriage Bans and Legalizations by Effective Date of Laws



Notes:

- A minus sign before the state indicates that the legal status of gay marriage changed from banned to legal.
- When a state has instituted gay marriage bans multiple times (e.g. by legislative action and then by popular vote), only the most recent ban has been included for each state.
- DC legalized same-sex marriage on Mar. 3, 2010.
- California legalized same-sex marriage on May 15, 2008, but banned it on Nov. 4 of the same year.

Super PACs

[Political Action Committee]

- **501 (C) (3): Standard PAC**
 - Limited donations to \$5,000 per candidate; \$15,000 per party
- **501 (C) (4) Super PAC**
 - Unlimited funds, No disclosure of contributors
 - “Educational only”, No “Quid Pro Quo”
 - No communication between Super PAC and candidate
- **Citizens United vs Federal Election Commission:**
 - Jan 21, 2010
 - 5-4 majority of U.S. Supreme Court
 - Scalia, Roberts, Alito, Thomas, Kennedy
 - **Holds that “freedom of speech” prohibited the government from restricting independent political expenditures by a nonprofit corporation.**
 - Citizens United wanted to air a film critical of Hillary Clinton in 2008 within 30 days of election, violating McCain-Feingold law.
 - Citizens United, a 501(c)(4) non-profit organization, wanted Michael Moore’s film “*Fahrenheit 911*” banned from airing within 30 days of 2004 election, claiming it was political. FEC dismissed Citizen United’s claim.

Mememes

- **A meme (/ˈmi:m/ MEEM)[1] is:**
 - **"an idea, behavior, or style that spreads from person to person within a culture".[2] A meme acts as a unit for carrying cultural ideas, symbols, or practices that can be transmitted from one mind to another through writing, speech, gestures, rituals, or other imitable phenomena with a mimicked theme.**
- **"Internet meme"**
 - **A concept that spreads rapidly from person to person via the Internet, largely through Internet-based E-mailing, blogs, forums, imageboards like 4chan, social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram or Twitter, instant messaging, and video hosting services like YouTube and Twitch.tv.[50]**
- **In 2013 Richard Dawkins characterized an Internet meme as one deliberately altered by human creativity,**
 - **distinguished from Dawkins's original idea involving mutation by random change and a form of Darwinian selection.[51]**

Military clout

- Military budget is 54% of Congressional discretionary spending budget, over \$600B.
- National intelligence programs add another \$45B not counted in military spending.
- Private contractors are 22% of military workforce, and account for 50% of workforce cost.
 - Each private contractor costs more than double the equivalent in uniformed personnel.
 - Defense Comptroller Robert Hale
- “Military-Industrial Complex” term by Eisenhower (farewell address, 1960) was originally termed the “Military-Industrial-Congressional” complex, but he changed it to avoid offending Congress.
- Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting (FAIR) now calls it the “Military-Industrial-Media” complex.

Treatment of vets

- February 2007: Washington Post expose on neglect of patients at Walter Reed Naval Hospital breaks.
 - Traumatic cases languish for weeks and months
 - Cockroach-infested, black mold stained patient quarters
- 2014: Jon Stewart's expose against Veterans Administration backlog and seemingly intentional red tape result in resignation of VA chief Eric Shinseki

Technology in politics

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- Email

Religion in politics

- **Separation of Church and State**
 - Pilgrims and others fled Europe to achieve religious freedom in America.
 - Enlightenment: John Locke (1632-1704) wrote of the ***Social Contract*** in which government lacked authority over the individual conscience. This view was later adopted in the first amendment to the U.S. Constitution.
 - 1802: Thomas Jefferson wrote of a
 - “Wall of separation between church and state”
 - Letter to the Danbury Baptist Association in 1802

Religion in today's politics

- Ralph Reed and the Christian Coalition
- Evangelicals battle for “hearts and minds”
- Catholics and the issue of abortion
- Invading your “rights” with my religious beliefs

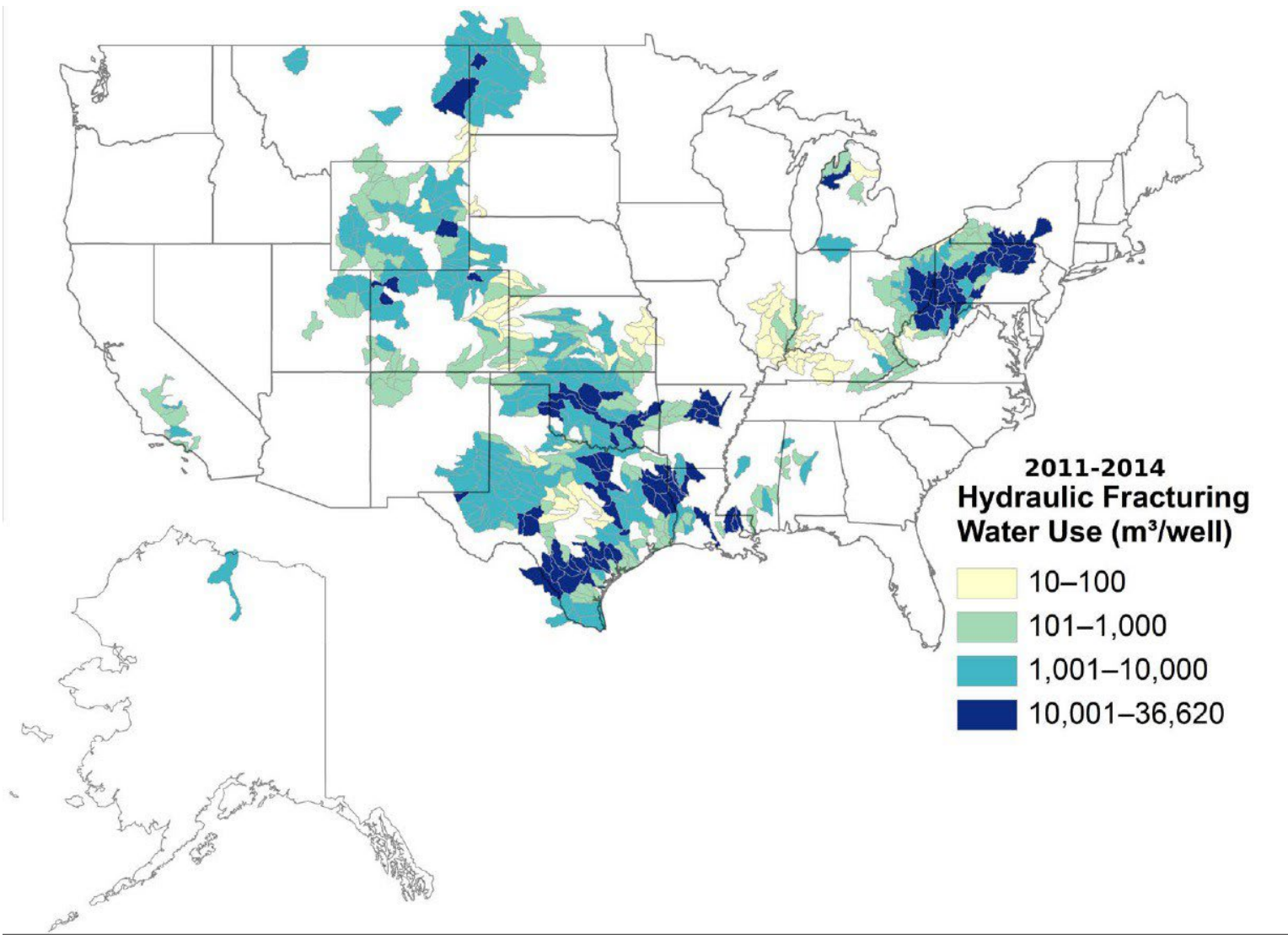
The Flag

- National Anthem at sporting events:
 - Is it a flag? Is it the military only?
 - Whose flag is it?
 - Whose anthem is it?
 - 3rd stanza on killing the Hessians and rebellious slaves
 - Francis Scott Key was a slave-owner and anti-abolitionist
- Flag pins
 - If you don't wear one, are you unpatriotic?

Fracking

- **Fracking:**
 - Injecting water, sand and unspecified ingredients into wells to create cracks in deep rock formations.
- Extends potential of fossil fuel extraction, including gas, oil and coal.
- Unknown potential for pollution of major subsurface water tables.
 - Drilling companies do not have to say what chemicals they are injecting into sub-surface fissures

U.S. Fracking Map



Code words

- **“Takers”**
 - Framing the discussion. Assumes that speaker is a “giver”.
 - Trudeau’s Ruby Shoals barbershop scene and town hall question: People ignoring the fact that they are “takers” too.
 - Agricultural subsidies for not planting
 - More poor whites in U.S. than poor blacks, yet assumption is racial
 - Tea party advocates in government-supplied scooter-chairs (Matt Taibbi’s article in *Rolling Stone*)

Macho in politics

- Donald Trump's statement that he could shoot someone on 5th Avenue in NYC and not lose any votes
- Alpha House scene, S1 ep. 11: Tea Party candidate Al Hickok's legal shooting of 3rd person in "stand your ground" circumstances
- Verbal bravado substitutes for heroism
 - Injection of hypothetical "What if ..." scenarios

Circus debates

- 2016 Republican Presidential Debate



Circus debates

- Alpha House:
 - Pennsylvania Republican Primary Debate



Circus debates

- Number of candidates, divided by time, means less depth per issue
- Confusion multiplies by the square of the number of voices
- Lack of moderation leads to chaos
- Chaos can be the desired effect for front runner
- From Sun Tzu, The Art of War
 - **“If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.”**

Paying No Taxes

- **Alpha House:** Clem Castles proudly announces that Cappy's Clam Shack has “legally not paid taxes since 1995.”
- **27 companies in the Standard & Poor's 500** reported paying no taxes in 2015.
 - This is considered a desirable achievement in accounting.
- **2013: Warren Buffett** announces that he pays a lower tax rate than his secretary.

Congressional obstruction

- **October 2010 : Republican Job #1**
 - Mitch McConnell announces that the “single most important priority” of the Republican party will be to make sure that the Obama Presidency is a failure.
- **September 2011: American Jobs Act**
 - Speaker John Boehner refuses Obama’s request to address a joint session of Congress to present the American Jobs Act.
 - 2011: Republicans filibuster extended unemployment benefits
 - 2011: Republicans filibuster Small Business Jobs Act
- **December 2012 : Gun Control**
 - After Sandy Hook Elementary school shootings Republicans filibustered bipartisan bill expanding background checks for gun purchases.
- **2012-2013: Obama’s Federal nominees blocked**
 - More than 27 filibusters of Obama nominees to Federal positions. Compared to none between the Eisenhower and Ford administrations, and 2 in the Carter administration.
- **March 2016 : Supreme Court Vacancy**
 - After the death of Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, Mitch McConnell leads Republican blockade of the nomination of Merrick Garland to the U.S. Supreme Court. Republicans aim to postpone the nomination of any Supreme Court candidate until the next administration.

Swift-Boating

- **Swift-boating**

- Term used to describe an unfair or untrue political attack.
- Term derived from the name of the organization "**Swift Boat Veterans for Truth**" (SBVT, later the Swift Vets and POWs for Truth, a 527 tax exempt organization)
 - The group produced a series of television ads and a bestselling book, **Unfit for Command** attacking Kerry
 - Group was financed by "dark money"
 - Federal Election Commission fined the group in 2004 (after the campaign) for not focusing on issues (527 charter)
- **Widely publicized—and later discredited—campaign against 2004 U.S. presidential candidate John Kerry**
 - Kerry served on a "Swift boat" (like JFK's PT boat) during the Vietnam War
 - Kerry received medals for his heroism on the boat
 - His opponent, George W. Bush, safely skated through non-combat service in the Texas Air National Guard during the Vietnam era

George W. Bush standing

- **G.W.'s Stand-in: Jeb Bush**
 - Ridiculed by Donald Trump in 2016 debates
 - Received 0.92% of the vote in Republican primaries
 - Acquired 4 pledged delegates compared to Donald Trump's 1457
 - None of the Bush family attended the 2016 Republican National Convention
- **Post-Presidential activities**
 - **Jimmy Carter:** *Habitat For Humanity*
 - **Bill Clinton:** *Clinton Global Initiative*
 - **George W. Bush:** *Painting his toes in the bathtub*

Faking character

- **2003: NBC anchor Brian Williams**
 - Busted for claiming that he was part of a helicopter mission in Iraq that was attacked.
 - Untruth came to light in 2015 and he was suspended from NBC news desk
- **1968-74: George W. Bush military record**
 - Committed to six year contract with Texas Air National Guard, May 1968
 - Did not choose to serve in Vietnam, skipped many appearances at Alabama air station to which he was transferred; promoted to Lieutenant for no particular reason; flight status suspended 1972

Sexual Abuse in the Military

- **1991 “Tail Hook” Scandal**
 - More than 100 U.S. Navy and Marine Corps aviation officers were alleged to have sexually assaulted 83 women and 7 men
 - 35th Annual Tailhook Association Symposium at the Las Vegas Hilton, September 8 to 12, 1991
 - Similar scandals include the
 - ▪ 1996 Aberdeen scandal
 - ▪ 2003 US Air Force sexual assault scandal
 - ▪ 2012 US Air Force sexual assault scandal
- **2012 Pentagon survey found that approximately 26,000 women and men were sexually assaulted**
 - Of those, only 3,374 cases were reported.
- **2013, a new Pentagon report found that 5,061 troops reported cases of assault**
 - only 484 cases went to trial
 - only 376 resulted in convictions
- **2014 Department of Defense found that**
 - In the past year 62 percent of active service members who reported sexual assault had experienced retaliation, including professional, social, and administrative actions or punishments

Congressional horse trading

- **TARP for Don't Ask, Don't Tell:**
 - Obama traded off pursuit of Wall Street's malfeasance in the Great Recession and the near trillion-dollar T.A.R.P. deal in order to get "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" repealed.
- **1993-2001: Clinton judicial compromise**
 - With Republicans blocking ALL judicial nominees, Clinton administration agrees to nominate one conservative judge for each liberal or middle-of-the-road judicial nomination.

Ronald Reagan's words

- Ronald Reagan is of more use to neo-conservatives as an abstract reference than a historical reality
- Trudeau shows how Ronald Reagan's own words are no longer far enough to the right to satisfy the Tea Party's agenda
- Jim Morris plays the Ronald Reagan impersonator at the Republican retreat.
 - He played Ronald Reagan in Trudeau's off-Broadway musical *"Rap Master Ronnie"*