Like most observers, I suspect, I find myself so enraged by the BP oil spill I don't even know where to direct my anger. Obviously, BP should be at the top — Dan was appropriately eloquent in his word choice by calling the company's series of errors and negligent acts a cluster%#@*. And the federal government, particularly the Mineral Management Service, was simply the handmaiden of the oil companies, requiring virtually nothing of them despite environmental statutes on the books and despite ample warnings from other agencies that a major spill could wreak havoc. Even worse are reports that some MMS employees were on the take from oil companies, receiving free trips, rigging contracts, letting oil companies fill out their own inspection reports and behaving, as one MMS supervisor explained, as if they were "part of the oil industry," not regulators of it. Though Obama doesn't get all the blame for the MMS culture of corruption, he certainly doesn't get any accolades for allowing the agency to continue to run amok well into his presidency. I also think Obama is missing a huge opportunity to push hard for climate and energy legislation in the wake of the disaster — what better proof do we need that it's time to reduce our reliance on oil and shift to alternative fuels? And then there's Congress, giving massive tax and royalty breaks to the oil industry to induce the kind of risky drilling in the Gulf that led to the accident even when the price of oil made such incentives unnecessary. Indeed, as the L.A. Times reports, the U.S. earns less in royalties from drilling on public lands (including in the Gulf) than virtually any other oil-producing country.

But there's one other big culprit in all of this. It's all of us. Americans love their cars and their cheap gas and turn the other cheek to the environmental risks inevitable in the search for ever more oil, even in environmentally sensitive and hard to access spots like the deep sea location of the BP blowout. We do little to support legislation that could reduce our dependence on oil. Support for taxing gasoline to get consumers to internalize the harms that fuel consumption creates is considered political suicide. And so, perhaps the only silver lining in this very, very dark cloud is what Andrew Leonard hopes will happen: that the worse the spill gets, the greater the chance that the politics in favor of climate and energy legislation improve. I share his hope but what an awful price to pay to get us to see the error of our ways.