



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE

NEWSLETTER #46 — JAN. 6, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

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Who Can Be Screwed?

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Jan. 6, 2012)

Let me just talk simply about one of the top two Republican dogmas currently in vogue. I guess #1 would have to be NO MORE TAXES FOR THE RICH!.

And, for the purposes of this piece, I'm going to assume that #2 is something about welfare, etc. The whole social services area of government. I really don't want to state the Republican position unfairly or too harshly. Some of you Republicans help me out here, please.

I could say something like, Republicans want to throw the poor out into the streets to die. That sounds harsh. Let me try again, they don't think everyone is entitled to healthcare. What do those who aren't entitled do? In the interest of keeping it simple, let's just say Republicans want to cut back on all of these services. They want to spend less money in these areas. They want to privatize. De-regulate. Get those big corporations in there doing these jobs efficiently, cheerfully serving the public interest. Republicans don't like Social Security or Medicare or Medicaid or Obamacare, even though, from what I've been reading lately, small businessmen and workers should love Obamacare. It's already bringing down insurance costs, and what's wrong with forcing insurance companies to play fair concerning pre-existing conditions, preventive medicine, and not dropping paying customers?

OK. So substitute your own description of the Republican position on government social services. You know what I mean. LESS!

Sooooo, let's talk about less for whom, shall we?

The party of Family Values. The party that wants to come into our bedrooms and tell us what we can and cannot do. The Christian party. Anti-birth control, Anti-sex education. Anti-abortion. (A zygote is a fetus is a person and a person is an act of God and that person must be protected by the government, even from his or her own mother. That baby person has rights that are absolute, like the entire Constitution.) Homophobic. Sword rattling. Got to preserve those gun rights (only!) in the Constitution. Censor the internet. Book burning Creationists. Hypocritical adulterers and clientele of prostitutes. Law and order! Anti-alcohol. Pro-tobacco. Anti-drug. Bible thumpers. Born again. The teachings of Jesus, right? Care for the poor. Love and forgive your enemies. Family values.

Who do these Christians want to give less to? Who gets squeezed? The billionaires? LOL!

And remember that another key tenant of Republican dogma is that we all have to be individualists, suck it up, and no matter what, make our own way in the world, without help from the government, just like each and every

Republican evidently claims to have done, except the ones like R0mney, who were born with golden plates from God in their mouths.

Candidates for Who Can Be Screwed:

1. **Children** — Let's say there is an orphan who has no family. Private agencies are nearly broke, yet do heroic work, but it's not enough. No government responsibility? Weird. What about children being sexually abused in their homes? Save money by letting the abuse continue? What if a child is hungry? Republican hearts don't break? Aren't we all ultimately responsible? Aren't Republicans very, very responsible for the children who are here who would otherwise not be? Aren't they the true parents of those children? Republicans forced their conception and/or their birth. But no responsibility?

2. **Oldies** — For this one there's even that Biblical injunction to "honor thy parents". Are we going to help these people? Are we even going to allow programs to continue that citizens have paid a fair price for— Social Security and Medicare? When Republicans call them "entitlements," it sure sounds like they think the programs are something that can be taken away. Thanks. Thanks for the sense of security the elderly must feel, that same sense of security and stability Republicans claim is so essential for business to create jobs. A sin and a crime, as my mother used to say.

3. **The Unemployed** — These people were working and/or want to work. We need them paying taxes. They want to pay taxes. It's hardly their fault, collectively, that the jobs don't exist anymore. That's the result of Washington and Wall Street policies and agendas over decades. Screw the workers, right?

4. **The Homeless** — Many of them have other, serious problems. Republicans should see them as eyesores and security risks, if nothing else. "There but for the grace of God go I" never occurs to them. Mostly the homeless don't vote. Maybe we could just pretend the problem doesn't exist? That it doesn't exist in the midst of millions of empty, decaying houses the banks foreclosed on, right after destroying the economy and getting their bail-out. Where exactly is their right to happiness for the homeless? Ah, they have the pursuit! If the unemployed, the oldies, and the children (according to Newt) would only **get off their lazy butts and get to work!** People say there aren't enough jobs. Republicans say, "Go create some yourself, like we did, lazy butt!"

5. **Vets and Homeless Vets** — Well, here's a problem. Some of the unfortunate people who are responsible for their own problems and have to take care of themselves are the heroes the Republicans sent into battle for "truth, justice, and the American Way." Long may it wave. No responsibility here? Then why is the job so far from finished? The VA is a heroic organization, doing much with little. I suppose it's all their fault? Surely Republicans would have to admit that there should be no homeless vets. Then surely, in a country where all are equal, there should be no homeless. Period.

6. **The Handicapped** — I know the Access laws were a big expense and imposition. Too bad we couldn't have kept all these folks in the back of the bus, right? That would have saved a lot of what's important— \$\$\$\$. Why help them? They should help themselves, like Republicans did. For instance, it's a little known fact that many of these independent, conservative Republicans didn't even have parents. They raised themselves from babyhood up with no thanks to anyone else, thank you. Now, if Republicans can do that, why can't the handicapped cope with a little handicap and **get off their lazy butts!**

7. **The Mentally Retarded and Mentally Ill** — They should just take their medication and leave us the f*ck alone! I liked that trailer park in Indiana where a little girl was recently murdered by a neighbor. The neighbor didn't happen to be one of the 14 registered sex offenders who live in the neighborhood. This little girl probably deserved to live in such a terrible place, where society essentially fed her to the wolves. We should all be so proud. Oh, I forgot. Children aren't important enough to be taken care of after they're born! (see #1, above)

8. **Patients in Comas** — Well...it may or may not be their fault... They certainly aren't going to contribute anything to the solution of their problems or vote or pay any taxes or do anything but demand resources.

Surely they are expendable if money is going to be saved somewhere. Can ethnic cleansing be far behind? What would be a good location for the first gas chamber? Maybe Texas? Mississippi?

You see, it might sound cool to talk about how everyone should just take care of themselves, but it doesn't really get us anywhere. We, all mankind, learned long ago that it just doesn't work like that. Why turn our backs on those hard-won lessons? This Republican talking point of individual responsibility is defeatist, elitist, and unworkable, unless you want fighting in the streets. We as a society have responsibilities that are really responsibilities to ourselves, our families, and our tribe. Or society is in real trouble. If Republicans deny their responsibilities to the above groups, I just want to hear them openly admit it, or shut up about it and open their wallets. I want to hear them admit it's hypocritical to impose unwanted babies on women, then say they owe those children nothing. These babies apparently have the vaunted Right to Life, but no further rights to true liberty or a meaningful pursuit of happiness. I want Republicans to break down and admit they're secretly, deathly fearful that they're flamingly gay!

Let's all simply run away from our responsibilities to those more unfortunate than we are and go count our money before the lazy rioters come and destroy everything.

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20120105-22	18:58	Ben	Re: Who Can Be Screwed? (reply to SteveB, above)
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You were angry when you wrote this...

20120105-23	19:02	Art	Re: Who Can Be Screwed? (reply to SteveB, above)
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Well, I think you're going a little light on them, but OK. [:-) –SteveB]

Funny thing is, and we all know this, most Republicans don't see themselves this way at all. Further most right wing tea bag conservatives think they are the salt of the earth and it is us godless socialist, communist, Nazis who are the representatives of evil. (I think maybe they may have some of that 'ist' stuff a little confused.) It reminds me of early talk in WW I when both Allies and Central Powers were absolutely convinced that God was on their side. Someone responded that God was really just on the side of the big battalions.

Personally I do not see how Republicans can reconcile their position with what you have laid out below. Time and again we see smart well thought out and factually documented studies that repute most of their positions. That is why I sent that article on the USA vs. Europe on meritocracy. Turns out they by in large Europe is much more merit based than we are and it shows in their productivity. Why does health care costs so much more over here compared to Europe and yet collectively we get less? It goes on and on. It's not a matter of picking Europe over America, which will be the first finger pointed, the facts are there, we have examples where other things seem to work better and we need to deal with that.

During the period after Vietnam the Army, and to a lesser degree the other services took a hard look at themselves and discovered we really weren't very good at what we are supposed to be doing. We were living on our reputations from WW II and our self inflated opinions of ourselves. It wasn't going to win any battles in the next fight. So, we took a long look, set up some rigorous testing concepts at the new National Training Center and using newly developed technology like the Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System (MILES) which ended the old playground cowboy and Indian "bang, bag, I got you first!!" Instead with laser emitters on every weapon and laser sensors on each person and vehicle, you could tell who actually did what. We trained an aggressor force equipped largely with Soviet weapons, and then sent out best rated battalions commanded by many self proclaimed of our finest to kick their ass. Instead, the aggressors kicked these hot shot battalions and their commanders all over the ballpark, again and again. From that we learned that talk doesn't cut it, you have to pay attention to facts, learn, and train and work hard to get really good.

That's where it seems to me the country is today. We can either stop telling ourselves we are the best at everything and start paying attention to facts or we can continue to slide downhill in the self delusional slide we are in. And oh by the way, trying to go back won't solve anything. The only historical case I can think of where a country tried to go back was Japan in 1603. Given the nature of the world at that time, it worked internally for awhile but meanwhile the rest of the world progressed and when Admiral Perry showed up in the 1850s Japan found itself throwing rocks at cannons. They eventually sort of recovered but because so much of their society was so far out of date it took a long time and a lot of bloodshed.

So, to end this long winded discourse, I still think we need to hone in on what are the real issues facing the nation and which group is best suited to address them. I do believe the Republicans are best equipped to address the issue of the sometimes funky renditions of the National Anthem.

[And, actually, having served briefly in the Army myself, I think that a military organization has got to be one of the most difficult things to change in the world. They do it only when their backs are to the wall, I think. The military is inherently conservative, and rightfully so. Yet, as Art explains, they were able to change. A hopeful sign. -SteveB]

20120105-24	19:10 Pam	Re: Who Can Be Screwed? (reply to Art, above)
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This is really good, Art. The military reboot is a good example of what a realistic approach and a willingness to learn can do.

Since you brought up Japan--you all might enjoy *The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet* by David Mitchell. It's about Japan before whites were allowed ashore and only a small contingent of Dutch traders were permitted to trade from an island offshore that they were forbidden to leave. It's kind of esoteric, but very interesting and full of drama. It's a novel.

[20120105-16](#) 15:07 SteveB Quote: Stephen Colbert on Serving the Poor



"If this is going to be a Christian nation that doesn't help the poor, either we have to pretend that Jesus was just as selfish as we are, or we've got to acknowledge that He commanded us to love the poor and serve the needy without condition and then admit that we just don't want to do it."

[20120105-01](#) 10:25 Pam Re: Alan Grayson: Rick Santorum Is Wrong (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #45)

I want Alan Grayson to be our next President. He's terrific. If his actions match his words, we have a new hero.

[20120105-02](#) 10:30 Pam Re: "Church in Nigeria Donates to the U.S." (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #45)

This speaks volumes.

[20120105-04](#) 11:11 Art Re: "Church in Nigeria Donates to the U.S." (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #45)

More here than meets the eye methinks. Any background? I've been to Nigeria, nothing good ever came out of that area.

[20120105-05](#) 11:19 Pam Re: "Church in Nigeria Donates to the U.S." (reply to Art, FotM above)

Methinks you might be right, Art.

There's a thing called "the authority of print." If something is printed, it must be true. I'm sure the internet is filled with gobblygook.

Don't know if the Nigerians are in the business of sending aid to the U.S. Perhaps some are. But I wouldn't bet the farm on it.

[20120105-06](#) 11:57 SteveB Re: "Church in Nigeria Donates to the U.S." (reply to all, above)

No, no. This is what Snopes.com doesn't say: This is yet another of those Nigerian email scams. The church in Washington got an email telling them a rich benefactor had died and the church had inherited \$6,000,000, but, first, they had to wire \$50,000 to a special bank account in Nigeria. So, having faith in their fellow man, they took the money intended for the orphan's home and wired it to the account. The lord would make it grow. The \$3000 is what the church thinks is the first installment on the \$6,000,000, but it's all they're going to see.

The truth is not always like soft sand. Sometimes it is like rock, and you have to keep hitting it with your pick until you break through. Either way, it takes a little digging, but it's worth it.

Truth: I did find a couple of links to the story and put one in yesterday's Newsletter. Don't know if that proves anything. There appears to be only one source. (http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/45879624/ns/local_news-tri_cities_wa/t/church-nigeria-donates-us/#.TwV_WtRSQhI)

20120105-07 11:58 SteveG Re: "Church in Nigeria Donates to the U.S." (reply to Pam, above)

Wasn't in print, was on the local news station filmed at the church in Kennewick.

20120105-08 12:08 SteveB Re: "Church in Nigeria Donates to the U.S." (reply to SteveG, above)

Then it MUST be true! Ya, right, and astronauts landed on the moon too. LOL! And Dick Cheney had nothing to do with 9/11. And I have a bridge I want to sell you.

Just kidding...I imagine it's a true story...and a sad one in one way, yet a happy one in another...

20120105-09 12:16 SteveG Re: "Church in Nigeria Donates to the U.S." (reply to SteveB, above)

I have no idea and no investment in the story being fact or fiction. The mere fact it was on the news is disturbing.

20120105-10 12:25 Pam Re: "Church in Nigeria Donates to the U.S." (reply to SteveG, above)

I think there's a lot on the news that is untrue or only partially true. I always liked Daniel Schorr, but long ago during the Watergate hearings, I was watching the news and heard someone testify that someone had had a hard time making up his mind about something. My memory is vague, but it was along those lines. The program cut to Daniel Schorr, who summarized what had just been shown in real time. Schorr said, So-and-so is wishy washy and all over the place. My point is, the interpretation or characterization of what was really said came totally from Mr. Schorr. In the space of a few seconds an entirely new spin had been set in motion. If I hadn't seen the two side by side, I'd have assumed Schorr's description was the right one. I don't think he was trying to be misleading, but the news is a bit like the telephone game, don't you think?

20120105-11 12:49 SteveB Re: "Church in Nigeria Donates to the U.S." (reply to SteveG, above)

Well...look at how many homeless people we have, let alone the number of people in poverty. Government isn't doing enough, but more importantly, the rich and big corporations aren't doing enough. There's no reason for there to be a problem. There's no reason for CEO's to make more than they do in Germany or for doctors to make twice as much in the U.S. as in Europe. They have the higher cost of living over there.

What do these people think happens if wealth doesn't get redistributed somehow, if not voluntarily, by taxation?

It's amazing to me that investors (the shareholders) of corporations permit the kinds of abuses we see in the US. But they are invariably the most complacent groups of sheep in the world. Led to slaughter.

20120105-12 12:50 Pam Re: "Church in Nigeria Donates to the U.S." (reply to SteveB, above)

Yeah, shareholders need to step up. Someone else suggested that as well--Art? I know when I get stuff from my portfolio (a grand term for not much), and they ask me to vote, I never bother. I don't know any of the people

anyway, so I leave it to those who do. I'd hate to see CEOs campaigning like politicians, but how are we to know who's good and who's not?

When I lived in Canada, doctors were paid about the same as university professors--a comfortable living but not extravagant. I've got nothing against doctors making money, but they do (some of them, not all) seem to live pretty high on the hog. My cousin's son is a pulmonologist, and his house is not to be believed.

[20120105-29](#) 23:59 Bill Re: "Church in Nigeria Donates to the U.S." (reply to SteveG, above)

Let me give the strong suggestion that it's a scam. I used to get grifter e-mails from Nigeria all the time. There is a large e-criminal class in Nigeria, and I'm sure they laugh every time they send out one of their bunco-grams. The probability is very high that this was just one more crooked twist on the innumerable, seedy little scams sent by these people. And, by the way, I want every one of you to send me a check for \$5,000 to escrow against the huge endowment I'm about to bestow on you.

[20120105-03](#) 10:42 Pam Re: New Orleans Roadfood Festival (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #45)

I know crawfish (crayfish?) are delicacies--like mini-lobsters--but the picture with the corn on the cob looks like a pot full of bugs to me.

[20120105-13](#) 13:27 Tom "Oklahoma Woman Shoots, Kills Intruder: 911 Operators Say It's OK to Shoot"

Good story. Randy has an important intro, please read his comments. Note how these "predators" stalked and planned this attack on this very young widow. (Her husband died less than a week before!)

fwd. from Randy:

This story is a good example of why women, and men, should be armed and trained to defend their homes.

An 18 year old mother was on the phone for 21 minutes with the 911 dispatcher before the stalker broke down her door and came after her with a 12" knife in his hands. She shot and killed him with a shotgun. This happened on New Year's Eve, after her husband had just died of cancer on Christmas day. Apparently her German Shepard dog was not enough deterrent for her attacker.

There are three videos on this incident, all on the same page. It is interesting to see how the story is covered differently in each story. One of the three talks about the Castle Doctrine, which allows you to shoot someone coming into your home. It notes that many still have not yet adopted that law. In those states, the law demands that you retreat from an attacker, even in your own home. After being on the phone with 911 for 21 minutes, how far should this young widow have to retreat while carrying her 3 month old baby?

"Oklahoma Woman Shoots, Kills Intruder: 911 Operators Say It's OK to Shoot" by Kevin Dolak and Ryan Owens, ABC News

Jan. 4, 2011, (http://abcnews.go.com/US/okla-woman-shoots-kills-intruder911-operators-shoot/story?id=15285605#.TwWbuVZ_lgh)

A young Oklahoma mother shot and killed an intruder to protect her 3-month-old baby on New Year's Eve, less than a week after the baby's father died of cancer.

Sarah McKinley says that a week earlier a man named Justin Martin dropped by on the day of her husband's funeral, claiming that he was a neighbor who wanted to say hello. The 18-year-old Oklahoma City area woman did not let him into her home that day.

On New Year's Eve Martin returned with another man, Dustin Stewart, and this time was armed with a 12-inch hunting knife. The two soon began trying to break into McKinley's home.

As one of the men was going from door to door outside her home trying to gain entry, McKinley called 911 and grabbed her 12-gauge shotgun.

McKinley told ABC News Oklahoma City affiliate KOCO that she quickly got her 12 gauge, went into her bedroom and got a pistol, put the bottle in the baby's mouth and called 911.

"I've got two guns in my hand -- is it okay to shoot him if he comes in this door?" the young mother asked the 911 dispatcher. "I'm here by myself with my infant baby, can I please get a dispatcher out here immediately?"

The 911 dispatcher confirmed with McKinley that the doors to her home were locked as she asked again if it was okay to shoot the intruder if he were to come through her door.

"I can't tell you that you can do that but you do what you have to do to protect your baby," the dispatcher told her. McKinley was on the phone with 911 for a total of 21 minutes.

When Martin kicked in the door and came after her with the knife, the teen mom shot and killed the 24-year-old. Police are calling the shooting justified.

"You're allowed to shoot an unauthorized person that is in your home. The law provides you the remedy, and sanctions the use of deadly force," Det. Dan Huff of the Blanchard police said.

Stewart soon turned himself in to police.

McKinley said that she was at home alone with her newborn that night because her husband just died of cancer on Christmas Day.

"I wouldn't have done it, but it was my son," McKinley told ABC News Oklahoma City affiliate KOCO. "It's not an easy decision to make, but it was either going to be him or my son. And it wasn't going to be my son. There's nothing more dangerous than a woman with a child."

20120105-14 13:44 Dennis Stupid Person's World Map



20120105-15 14:35 SteveB Re: Stupid Person's World Map (reply to Dennis, above)

Whoever did this map has truly been a round. I like Iceland and the Philippines, especially.

20120105-17 15:37 Ben Re: Stupid Person's World Map (reply to Dennis, above)

Hoot!

20120105-18 17:28 Art Re: Stupid Person's World Map (reply to Dennis, above)

I love it. Sadly I suspect it pretty well sums up the general geographic knowledge of most Americans.

20120105-19 17:37 Pam Re: Stupid Person's World Map (reply to Art, above)

Ain't that the truth?!

Those of you who went to junior high in Greencastle, do you remember Mr. Hammond, the geography teacher? I learned almost everything I know today about geography from him, and that's quite a lot compared to most people. I still remember coloring in those maps that he would put up on the bulletin board. I always hoped mine would be picked as the best, and sometimes it was. :-)

20120105-20 17:41 Art Re: Stupid Person's World Map (reply to Pam, above)

I had a college professor who taught a basic geography course. He was known to be a terror. The first day of class he handed out about three sheets, single spaced and two columns each of place names and told us you probably won't see any of these again except on a test, and then you'll see a lot of them. Great professor and we learned a lot, including how geography and climatic patterns shape our weather, all of it. I still remember.

[20120105-21](#) 18:46 SteveB Re: Stupid Person's World Map (reply to Pam, above)

HALITOSIS HAMILTON! But you learned your geography. He made it easy. Why doesn't everybody know geography?

The map is just precious, I think.

[20120105-25](#) 19:39 Dennis Re: Stupid Person's World Map (reply to Pam, above)

from SteveB:

Why doesn't everybody know geography?

Geography at GHS was not considered an "academic course." It was just me and the greasers and "Little Boo" was the teacher.

I had a minor in Geography at Western Michigan along with double majors in Social Science (mostly history) and Sociology. And look where all those liberal arts classes got me!

[20120105-26](#) 20:24 SteveB Re: Stupid Person's World Map (reply to Dennis, above)

Uh...liberal?

[20120105-27](#) 20:35 SteveG Re: Stupid Person's World Map (reply to Dennis, above)

They got you around the world a few times.

[20120105-28](#) 22:25 Bill Re: Stupid Person's World Map (reply to all, above)

I also had Reese Hammond for geography, and, despite the halitosis, he was a good and conscientious teacher. I had heard that he was graduated from DePauw, where he was on the football team and known to be tough. What has become of his daughter? Can't remember her name; dark hair; smart and pleasant.

—Friends of the Middle,
Steven W. Baker (SteveB), Editor/Moderator

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