



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #141 — MAY 18, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
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'I Stand by What I Said, Whatever It Was'

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, May 18, 2012)

Yes, indeed, that paragon of virtue, Mitt R0mney, says he's going to take the high road for a while, except that he already detoured down to the low road in a Sean Hannity interview which, unfortunately, was recorded. Imagine that!

The Huffington Post webpage, below, features two excellent videos. One shows R0mney's original position (Feb. 7, 2012), the other shows his latest flip-flop (yesterday).

Yes, this man has such a strong moral compass to lead us all...hey, Mittens, where the hell you thinking of leading us?"

"Mitt Romney: Ricketts Plan To Use Rev. Jeremiah Wright Against Obama Is 'Wrong Course'" by Huffington Post

May 17, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/17/mitt-romney-ricketts-plan_n_1525221.html?ref=elections-2012)

GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney on Thursday said that he disapproves of a Republican super PAC's plan to link President Barack Obama to Rev. Jeremiah Wright's inflammatory comments, a tactic that had been used by some in 2008, but rejected by then-presidential candidate John McCain.

"I want to make it very clear: I repudiate that effort," Romney told reporters in Florida, repeating a claim that he made in an earlier interview. "I think it's the wrong course for a PAC or a campaign."

But Romney also alleged that the Obama campaign was leading the charge with negative attacks.

"Having a campaign focused on character assassination is one thing I find offensive among many others," he said.

[It's great to know R0mney finds so many things offensive. Maybe the Obama Campaign can keep him in a constant state of offendedness. That should slow down even a robot a little bit. I'm sure the rich dude would be offended by a lot of the people I've hung out with, present company excepted, of course. —SteveB]

The billionaire, Joe Ricketts, founder of TD Ameritrade and father of Chicago Cubs chairman Tom Ricketts, has decided not to go forward with the campaign as a result of the pressure from Romney and Obama.

Asked about comments he gave to conservative commentator Sean Hannity earlier this year, Romney responded, **"I stand by what I said, whatever it was."**

At the time, Romney brought up Wright in order to criticize Obama for both being too secular and for being under the influence of Wright. **"I'm not sure which is worse, him listening to Reverend Wright or him saying that we ... must be a less Christian nation," Romney said in a February interview.**

[Let me see, Mitt, I just don't think it's possible to have this both ways. Are you on the high road or the low road? I certainly can't tell from what you've said (which is usually the case, by the way). You may well be a robot, but you're not simply a static hunk of whatever, you're a shifty, shape-changing robot such as the world has never seen before. –SteveB]

HuffPost's Sam Stein reported that the Obama campaign had been prepared for this line of attack, though it came earlier than they had expected.

Campaign manager Jim Messina took aim at the report earlier Thursday, calling it a "hate-filled, divisive campaign of character assassination" and accusing Romney of falling "short of the standard that John McCain set, reacting tepidly in a moment that required moral leadership."

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20120517-01	09:18	SteveG	Fw: CREDO Action Action: Tell the USDA Not to Play Chicken
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Three chickens per second.

Under a new plan proposed by USDA, that's how fast inspectors would have to conduct quality control inspections in poultry factories — six times the current rate.

Worse, USDA's proposed rules privatize these inspections, letting the industry police itself by replacing highly trained USDA food inspectors with poultry facility employees who have no required training.

Salmonella in our meat and poultry makes nearly a million people sick every year in the US — it's our number one cause of food-borne illness. USDA's new plan could make the problem even worse, and we have just days to stop it. Tell the USDA: Don't weaken poultry inspection standards!

Food safety groups are opposing the standards and veteran poultry inspectors are calling them "a big step back," and "a very, very bad idea."

Current rules provide for three inspectors to examine 140 birds per minute. Under the new rules, inspections would speed up to 200 per minute — with only one inspector on the line. Even the professionals say that is way too fast.

With far less time to inspect each chicken, unsanitary, defective poultry meat has a higher chance of making it into our supermarkets. And while USDA says it would save less than \$30 million per year on poultry inspection costs, it could cost the agency (and us) far more to deal with potential increases in foodborne illness.

Speeding up the poultry line isn't just hazardous to our health — it's also hazardous to those who work in poultry factories. Poultry workers already have an alarming rate of workplace injury from conditions which include a workplace full sharp objects like knives and scissors, and from the repetitive nature of poultry factory tasks. Speeding up the chicken line will only make conditions even more hazardous.

Tell the USDA: Don't weaken poultry inspection standards!

But while food and worker safety will undoubtedly suffer, the new rules are expected to result in a quarter of a billion dollar windfall to poultry companies.

The safety of our food, especially poultry which has such a high incidence of contamination, should be the highest priority of USDA. If their answer is less quality control inspection, more dangerous workplace conditions, and allowing an industry with a horrible safety record to police itself, it's probably time to go back to the drawing board.

Click below to submit a comment to the USDA before the May 29th deadline:

<http://act.credoaction.com/r/?r=3912&id=40256-3891339-XIegOhx&t=9>

Thank you for fighting for safe and healthy food.

Elijah Zarlin, Campaign Manager, CREDO Action from Working Assets

20120517-02	10:00	MarthaH	"G.O.P. 'Super PAC' Weighs Hard-Line Attack on Obama"
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"G.O.P. 'Super PAC' Weighs Hard-Line Attack on Obama" by Jeff Zeleny and Jim Rutenberg, *New York Times*

May 17, 2012, (<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/17/us/politics/gop-super-pac-weighs-hard-line-attack-on-obama.html>)

(WASHINGTON) A group of high-profile Republican strategists is working with a conservative billionaire on a proposal to mount one of the most provocative campaigns of the "super PAC" era and attack President Obama in ways that Republicans have so far shied away from.

Timed to upend the Democratic National Convention in September, the plan would "do exactly what John McCain would not let us do," the strategists wrote.

The plan, which is awaiting approval, calls for running commercials linking Mr. Obama to incendiary comments by his former spiritual adviser, the Rev. Jeremiah A. Wright Jr., whose race-related sermons made him a highly charged figure in the 2008 campaign.

"The world is about to see Jeremiah Wright and understand his influence on Barack Obama for the first time in a big, attention-arresting way," says the proposal, which was overseen by Fred Davis and commissioned by Joe Ricketts, the founder of the brokerage firm TD Ameritrade. Mr. Ricketts is increasingly putting his fortune to work in conservative politics.

The \$10 million plan, one of several being studied by Mr. Ricketts, includes preparations for how to respond to the charges of race-baiting it envisions if it highlights Mr. Obama's former ties to Mr. Wright, who espouses what is known as "black liberation theology."

The group suggested hiring as a spokesman an "extremely literate conservative African-American" who can argue that Mr. Obama misled the nation by presenting himself as what the proposal calls a "metrosexual, black Abe Lincoln."

A copy of a detailed advertising plan was obtained by The New York Times through a person not connected to the proposal who was alarmed by its tone. It is titled "The Defeat of Barack Hussein Obama: The Ricketts Plan to End His Spending for Good."

The proposal was presented last week in Chicago to associates and family members of Mr. Ricketts, who is also the patriarch of the family that owns the Chicago Cubs.

Brian Baker, president and general counsel of a super PAC called the Ending Spending Action Fund, said Mr. Ricketts had studied several advertising proposals in recent months and had not signed off on a specific approach to taking on Mr. Obama.

"Joe Ricketts is prepared to spend significant resources in the 2012 election in both the presidential race and Congressional races," Mr. Baker said in an interview Wednesday. "He is very concerned about the future direction of the country and plans to take a stand."

The document makes clear that the effort is only in the planning stages and awaiting full approval from Mr. Ricketts. People involved in the planning said the publicity now certain to surround it could send the strategists back to the drawing board.

But it serves as a rare, detailed look at the birth of the sort of political sneak attack that has traditionally been hatched in the shadows and has become a staple of presidential politics.

It also shows how a single individual can create his own movement and spend unlimited sums to have major influence on a presidential election in a campaign finance environment in which groups operating independently of candidates are flourishing.

Should the plan proceed, it would run counter to the strategy being employed by Mitt Romney's team, which has so far avoided such attacks. The Romney campaign has sought to focus attention on the economy, and has concluded that personal attacks on Mr. Obama, who is still well liked personally by most independent voters surveyed for polls, could backfire.

Mr. Ricketts has become an increasingly active player in Republican politics through several political action committees, including Ending Spending. He has a son, Pete, who is a member of the Republican National Committee from Nebraska and a daughter, Laura, who is a top contributor to Mr. Obama's re-election campaign. She has not been involved in her father's political efforts.

The 54-page proposal was professionally bound and illustrated with color photographs, indicating that it is far beyond a mere discussion. The strategists have already contacted Larry Elder, a black conservative radio host in Los Angeles, about serving as a spokesman, and the plan calls for a group of black business leaders to endorse the effort. The strategists have also registered a domain name, Character Matters.

The proposal suggests that Mr. Ricketts believes the 2008 campaign of Senator John McCain erred in not using images of Mr. Wright against Mr. Obama, who has said that the pastor helped him find Jesus but that he was never present for Mr. Wright's politically charged sermons. Mr. Obama left the church during the campaign.

Apparently referring to a Wright ad that was produced for the McCain campaign by Mr. Davis's firm but never used, the proposal opens with a quote from Mr. Ricketts: "If the nation had seen that ad, they'd never have elected Barack Obama."

The planning document is emblazoned with the logo of Strategic Perception, the political advertising firm of Mr. Davis, the colorful Republican operative who last worked on the Republican presidential campaign of former Gov. Jon M. Huntsman of Utah. Included on his "Recommended Team of Pirates" are the former Huntsman pollster Whit Ayres and the McCain campaign Internet strategist Becki Donatelli.

The document, which was written by former advisers to Mr. McCain, is critical of his decision in 2008 not to aggressively pursue Mr. Obama's relationship with Mr. Wright. In the opening paragraphs of the proposal, the Republican strategists refer to Mr. McCain as "a crusty old politician who often seemed confused, burdened with a campaign just as confused."

"Our plan is to do exactly what John McCain would not let us do: Show the world how Barack Obama's opinions of America and the world were formed," the proposal says. "And why the influence of that misguided mentor and our president's formative years among left-wing intellectuals has brought our country to its knees."

The plan is designed for maximum impact, far beyond a typical \$10 million television advertising campaign. It calls for full-page newspaper advertisements featuring a comment Mr. Wright made the Sunday after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. "America's chickens are coming home to roost," he said.

The plan is for the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte, N.C., to be "jolted." The advertising campaign would include television ads, outdoor advertisements and huge aerial banners flying over the convention site for four hours one afternoon.

The strategists grappled with the quandary of running against Mr. Obama that other Republicans have cited this year: "How to inflame their questions on his character and competency, while allowing themselves to still somewhat 'like' the man becomes the challenge."

Lamenting that voters "still aren't ready to hate this president," the document concludes that the campaign should "explain how forces out of Obama's control, that shaped the man, have made him completely the wrong choice as president in these days and times."

[20120517-03](#)

10:23 Pam

Re: "G.O.P. 'Super PAC' Weighs Hard-Line Attack on Obama" (reply to MarthaH, above)

I ask myself what Obama could have done differently. IMHO he did the best he could with Wall Street, the banks, and the auto industry. He did what he had to do. But there are other areas where his diffidence and conciliatory nature have led to disappointing results, ie., equal rights for LGBTs, green energy, the quality of our food supply--especially in poor communities, govt. programs to create jobs, at least until the private sector kicks in, global warming. He should be shouting from the rooftops about these things. The people who hate him will hate him anyway, and the people who like him, or want to, will feel validated. Everyone talks about how well Obama speaks, but, honestly?, he sounds just like any other slick politician to me, a fount of benign cliches. He is never impassioned. I only hope his campaign staff will steer him in the direction of plain speaking, tough talk, and a clear articulation of exactly what we're up against and how the old ways won't work anymore. I hate to say this, but politics is about who has the biggest bully on the playground.

[20120517-09](#)

17:32 MarthaH

"GOP Super PAC Rejects Plan to Invoke Jeremiah Wright"

"GOP Super PAC Rejects Plan to Invoke Jeremiah Wright" by Rachel Weiner, *The Washington Post*

May 17, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/post/gop-super-pac-considering-jeremiah-wright-attack-on-obama/2012/05/17/gIQABYtzVU_blog.html)

The founder of a conservative super PAC has rejected a proposal that would link President Obama to his former pastor Jeremiah Wright, a line of attack that the GOP rejected in 2008 and one which presumptive Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney repudiated today.

"It reflects an approach to politics that Mr. Ricketts rejects and it was never a plan to be accepted but only a suggestion for a direction to take," said Brian Baker, president of the Ending Spending Action Fund, who said the proposal was "one of several submitted ... by third-party vendors."

The New York Times got hold of the proposed campaign playbook, submitted by Republican strategists to TD Ameritrade founder Joe Ricketts, who has become increasingly involved in GOP politics of late.

The plan, called "The Defeat of Barack Hussein Obama: The Ricketts Plan to End His Spending for Good," would "do exactly what John McCain would not let us do," the strategists write, according to the Times report — tie Obama to Wright's controversial sermons.

Fred Davis, the ad man behind "I am not a witch," oversaw the proposal. Davis worked on the McCain campaign and argued in favor of a Wright ad then.

Strategic Perception, Davis' firm, said in a statement that the "the Ricketts family, never approved" the proposal "and nothing has happened on it since the presentation."

In an interview with TownHall.com, Romney also rejected the idea.

"I repudiate the effort by that PAC to promote an ad strategy of the nature they've described," Romney said. "I think what we've seen so far from the Obama campaign is a campaign of character assassination. I hope that isn't the course of this campaign. So in regards to that PAC, I repudiate what they're thinking about." (Asked later which Obama attacks he was referring to, Romney pointed to the president's Bain Capital ads.)

Earlier, Romney campaign manager Matt Rhoades said "we repudiate any efforts" to run "a campaign of character assassination." But he did not specifically condemn the PAC. That response was not enough for Obama's campaign; Obama campaign manager Jim Messina said in a statement that Romney "has fallen short of the standard that John McCain set, reacting tepidly in a moment that required moral leadership."

In his statement, Baker said that "Mr. Ricketts intends to work hard to help elect a President this fall who shares his commitment to economic responsibility, but his efforts are and will continue to be focused entirely on questions of fiscal policy, not attacks that seek to divide us socially or culturally."

House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) also weighed in, telling reporters, "I don't know what these other people will do or why they do it. All I know is the American people vote with their wallets."

The playbook prepared for Ricketts includes footage for a five-minute film called "Next," which includes footage of Wright declaring "God Damn America" and calls the pastor "the inspiration for Obama's campaign." Over an image of the two together, the ad declares that there's "simply a fundamental difference between his view of America and ours."

The document refers to Obama derisively as a "metrosexual black Abe Lincoln."

Wright was pastor of the president's Chicago church, Trinity United Church of Christ, and served a largely ceremonial role on Obama's 2008 African American Religious Leadership Committee until some of his more incendiary remarks came to light. Obama disavowed Wright's words in a March 2008 speech calling the sermons "a profoundly distorted view of this country."

McCain's campaign cut a Wright-themed ad in 2008 that never aired; the candidate decided he did not want to touch the subject. (The ad footage was later obtained by ABC News.)

"I remain proud of our campaign and proud of what we were able to accomplish," McCain said today. "I made my decision. I stand by that decision. The Romney campaign has repudiated that kind of strategy. It seems to me the matter is closed."

He laughed off descriptions in the playbook from some of his 2008 advisers that he was "crusty" and "confused" during the campaign. "It is what it is. My life has moved on. I moved on after, it's over. I enjoy being in the Senate. There's no reason for me to hold any grudges. It's a way for political operatives to continue to make money," he said.

Obama remains personally very well-liked. Republicans have shied away from attacks on his character, focusing instead on who best can handle the economy.

The proposal obtained by the *Times* suggests hiring an "extremely literate conservative African-American" to shield Republicans from accusations of race-baiting, the *Times* report says. (That same spokesman would claim that Obama presented himself, falsely, as a "metrosexual black Abe Lincoln.")

The \$10 million plan would include television and newspaper ads as well as outdoor advertisements and aerial banners, according to the *Times* report.

Attacks on Obama using Wright did air in the 2008 campaign.

Late in the 2008 race, an outside group did spend millions on an ad in battleground states tying Obama to the controversial pastor. The North Carolina GOP also aired a TV ad attacking Obama for his past association with Wright, over McCain's objections.

Pollster Whit Ayres and Internet consultant Becki Donatelli, named as recommended hires for the project in the playbook, said they had nothing to do with the proposal.

Ricketts's super PAC was a player in state Sen. Deb Fischer's surprise victory in Tuesday's Nebraska Republican Senate primary. His son, Pete Ricketts, is a member of the Republican National Committee from Nebraska who ran against Sen. Ben Nelson (D) in 2006. His daughter, Laura Ricketts, is co-owner of the Chicago Cubs — making her the first openly gay owner of a Major League Baseball team. She is a major fundraiser to Obama's reelection campaign.

[20120517-04](#) 10:23 Pam Re: 'Willard the Bain' (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #140)

I love Willard the Bain!! Whatta guy!

[20120517-05](#) 10:38 Paula Fw: This Belongs in the Email Hall of Fame!

Interesting viewpoints...

[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

(I agree and it's TIME FOR A CHANGE. Enough of this Nonsense Already! Yes, come November we need to Get Out and VOTE! Each of you must vote in November. Your vote matters. Vote wisely.)

Greetings All

Alas, alas, the times have changed, due to the Pied Piper from Chicago.

A really clever treatise, but sadly true...Hopefully we can set things right this fall!

How's this for apocalyptic literature. This was written by a pastor's wife in biblical prose as a commentary of current events. It is brilliant.



And it came to pass in the Age of Insanity that the people of the land called America , having lost their morals, their initiative, and their will to defend their liberties, chose as their Supreme Leader that person known as "The One."

He emerged from the vapors with a message that had no meaning; but He hypnotized the people telling them, "I am sent to save you." My lack of experience, my questionable ethics, my monstrous ego, and my association with evil doers are of no consequence. I shall save you with hope and change.

Go, therefore, and proclaim throughout the land that he who proceeded me is evil, that he has defiled the nation, and that all he has built must be destroyed.

And the people rejoiced, for even though they knew not what "The One" would do, he had promised that it was good; and they believed.

And "The One" said "We live in the greatest country in the world. Help me change everything about it!"

And the people said, "Hallelujah! Change is good!"

Then He said, "We are going to tax the rich fat-cats."

And the people said "Sock it to them!"

"And redistribute their wealth."

And the people said, "Show us the money!"

And then he said, "Redistribution of wealth is good for everybody."

And Joe the plumber asked, "Are you kidding me? You're going to steal my money and give it to the deadbeats??"

And "The One" ridiculed and taunted him, and Joe's personal records were hacked and publicized. One lone reporter asked, "Isn't that Marxist policy?" And she was banished from the kingdom.

Then a citizen asked, "With no foreign relations experience and having zero military experience or knowledge, how will you deal with radical terrorists?"

And "The One" said, "Simple. I shall sit with them and talk with them and show them how nice we really are; and they will forget that they ever wanted to kill us all!"

And the people said, "Hallelujah!! We are safe at last, and we can beat our weapons into free cars for the people!"

Then "The One" said "I shall give 95% of you lower taxes." And one,lone voice said, "But 40% of us don't pay ANY taxes."

So "The One"said, "Then I shall give you some of the taxes the fat-cats pay!"

And the people said, "Hallelujah! Show us the money!"

Then "The One" said, "I shall tax your Capital Gains when you sell your homes!" And the people yawned and the slumping housing market collapsed.

And He said. "I shall mandate employer-funded health care for every worker and raise the minimum wage. And I shall give every person unlimited healthcare and medicine and transportation to the clinics."

And the people said, "Give me some of that!"

Then he said, "I shall penalize employers who ship jobs overseas."

And the people said, "Where's my rebate check?"

Then "The One" said, "I shall bankrupt the coal industry and electricity rates will skyrocket!"

And the people said, "Coal is dirty, coal is evil, no more coal! But we don't care for that part about higher electric rates."

So "The One" said, Not to worry. If your rebate isn't enough to cover your expenses, we shall bail you out. Just sign up with the ACORN and you troubles are over!"

Then He said, "Illegal immigrants feel scorned and slighted. Let's grant them amnesty, Social Security, free education, free lunches, free medical care, bi-lingual signs and guaranteed housing..."

And the people said, "Hallelujah!" and they made him king!

And so it came to pass that employers, facing spiraling costs and ever-higher taxes, raised their prices and laid-off workers. Others simply gave up and went out of business and the economy sank like unto a rock dropped from a cliff. The bank banking industry was destroyed. Manufacturing slowed to a crawl. And more of the people were without a means of support.

Then "The One" said, "I am the "the One"- The Messiah - and I'm here to save you! We shall just print more money so everyone will have enough!"



But our foreign trading partners said unto Him. "Wait a minute. Your dollar is not worth a pile of camel dung! You will have to pay more..."

And "The One" said, "Wait a minute. That is unfair!!"

And the world said, "Neither are these other idiotic programs you have embraced. Lo, you have become a Socialist state and a second-rate power. Now you shall play by our rules!"

And the people cried out, "Alas, alas!! What have we done?" But yes verily, it was too late.

The people set upon The One and spat upon him and stoned him, and his name was dung. And the once mighty nation was no more; and the once proud people were without sustenance or shelter or hope. And the Change "The One" had given them was as like unto a poison that had destroyed them and like a whirlwind that consumed all that they had built.

And the people beat their chests in despair and cried out in anguish, "give us back our nation and our pride and our hope!!" But it was too late, and their homeland was no more.

You may think this a fairy tale, but it's not. It's happening RIGHT NOW

P.S. -- Yeah, this is too true to be funny.. Tragic, but not funny; tragic but true.

IF YOU CAN'T SEE THIS HAPPENING.... JUST RUB YOUR EYES AND BLINK A FEW MORE TIMES REALLY GOOD.

[The mild-mannered, weak, compromising Obama did all that??? Amazing! --SteveB]

20120517-14 21:11 SteveB Re: This Belongs in the Email Hall of Fame!

Thanks for forwarding this to me. However, I must take exception to a few things I found that might keep this email out of my personal "hall of fame."

First of all, it's pretty old. Originally, I would guess from before the 2008 election, but after Joe the Plumber. The best reference I found has it word-for-word and is dated June 22, 2009:

http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=view_all&address=132x8488588.

ACORN has been defunct a long time now.

It's kinda funny that this email challenges "The One's" ability to fight terrorism. President Obama certainly seems to be handling this task at least as well as Bush, and I don't see bin Laden or Gaddafi bothering us anymore.

I loved this line, where "The One" says: "We live in the greatest country in the world. Help me change everything about it!"

How ironic! Until Reagan and Bush and the fat cats started cutting taxes, deregulating and destroying the middle class and unions, America was doing fine, as I remember it.

From Reagan (at least) through Bush, America was forced to embark on a radical course of conservative Republican experimentation—in lower taxes, especially for the rich; in deregulation of nearly everything regulated, especially the pet projects of the fat cats like markets and investments and mortgages; in unending wars and deficits; in massive illegal immigration. This is simply the Republican economic legacy. It caused the Crash of 2008, the Housing Bubble, the loss of American manufacturing, the dramatic increase in the number of poor, and the dramatic decrease in the middle class and their purchasing power. This email tries to blame the current economic problems on "The One." Some of us have memories. The deceit isn't going to work. All the data is too clear.

"The One" is just one of us (most of the nation's smartest economists agree) who believe we must change course from this disastrous conservative radicalism.

As far as redistribution of wealth goes, and if we're going to get Biblical, it seems to me that Jesus would have favored pretty radical redistribution of wealth, but maybe you'd say I'm wrong. Besides, it's perfectly OK to ignore whatever you choose, as far as the Bible goes.

Sorry to tell you, Joe the Plumber, but redistribution of wealth has always happened in America, will always happen, and should happen. The problem has been that most of the redistribution has been from the bottom to the top. That is what must change for America to thrive. History proves that.

My newsletter provides loads of verifiable facts and numbers: <http://www.friendsofthemiddle.org>.

Health care? You don't find that we have huge health care problems in America? Who's trying to fix them? "The One" and who else?

One other thing...I am so tired of the socialist label being thrown around. George Bush and Mitt Romney believe in a progressive income tax system, or have said they do. Bush proved he did. I guess that makes them redistributors of wealth and socialists? Bush took a lot of tax dollars from you and me and redistributed them to his rich friends at Halliburton, etc. The defense budget is fully half the total U.S. budget. It constitutes a nearly total redistribution of wealth. I don't hear any of the "socialist" Republicans squawking about that.

I could go on and on, there are more lies here to be debunked, but read our FotM Newsletter for more, or this:

[Here's another rebuttal from the first website listed above:](#)

Yea, though thou has followed the deceitful guidance of false prophets for lo these past 8 years, thou shalt still receive salvation. Those who have found enemies, even amongst friends, those who have claimed false provenance, masquerading as one entity when truly another (ye Joseph that does not plumb), those who have stolen your money while claiming to be protecting your treasures, and those who invoke their Lord's name while committing acts that blaspheme his teachings are to be shunned and driven into exile. Thou hast adorned the temple with gold, not faith. Thou hast allowed the weakest amongst you to be cast aside, contrary to the most fundamental teachings of your Lord. Thou hast been blinded by devotion to the words of elders who present interpretations of God's word as though their own, and thou has thus lain with wolves masquerading as sheep. Yea, though the words of one, who those amongst you have chosen to lead you, can do little to save you from yourselves, you can choose to make the journey together. To decry a mortal man as a false messiah, while acclaiming another of your choosing as a true messiah shall render you both afflicted and powerless. To squander the treasures of life and resource on war and profit while not taking

care of your people, to tithe and devote faith to the moneylenders and not the church, to honor the lucre more than the Lord, and to find the value of human existence in gold instead of faith has cast your people into a chasm of bewilderment and fear. The light of salvation shines brightly, though the darkness is not easily overcome. There are those amongst you that will say the bright light blinds them and causes them pain. They will be wont to lead you back into the darkness. They must not be shunned, they must be helped to seek the light; they only know the comfort of their fears, and will only listen to those amongst you who prey upon those fears. The true strength of your nation lies in the faith of the shepherd, not the wolf nor the sheep. To claim true faith, while sowing the seeds of destruction with false claims and petty arguments, shall provide you with no salvation. A man amongst you must lead, not without question, but with support. Wouldst thou rather continue along the path that has gotten one to this dire condition? Do you still worship the golden calf, do you still seek true salvation in gold?

Yea, the wolf had found the voice of the sheep, and many, yea most, of the sheep followed. The shepherd, the lowly shepherd who makes no false claims to be the messiah, must now overcome the wolves and reassemble the flock. Many of the sheep will follow the wolves, to their peril. One must pray that the shepherd will gather most of the flock and restore their peaceful lives.

Thanks again. I love diggin' into this stuff.

20120517-06 15:53 SteveB Fw: Daily Kos Action: Join the Fight to Recall Gov. Scott Walker

from Daily Kos:

Nearly a year and a half ago, statewide protests in Wisconsin provided the spark that became the national Occupy movement. Now, Wisconsin can close the deal by recalling Scott Walker as governor, and you can help make that happen.

Please help turn out voters for the June 5 recall election by signing up with Workers' Voice:

<http://act.workersvoice.org/page/s/recall-walker?source=dkos-email-120517a>.

In a race where public opinion is hardened and millions on television barely moves the polls, a top-notch voter turnout effort is going to mean the difference between victory and defeat.

Our partners at Workers' Voice, a new political action committee affiliated with the AFL-CIO, is deploying get out the vote tools that leverage the power of your social networks with information in the voter file.

You can help identify voters, make phone calls, or send your own personalized direct mail to people you know. And you can do it all from home, no matter where you live.

Please join the final push to turn out voters for the Wisconsin recall election by signing up with Workers' Voice.

Keep fighting, Markos Moulitsas, Publisher, Daily Kos

20120517-07 16:47 SteveB From the Right: "The Menace of Bipartisanship"

[But, George, the bankers and fat cats are borrowing money from the government night and day for about 0% interest. Why should students be gouged? Surely it would benefit the nation more to subsidize student loans than fat cat bankers at 0%. And you're griping about 3.4%? I say let all students above a certain level of achievement attend college for free, as an investment in the future of our nation which is obviously of no real concern to bankers. -SteveB]

"The Menace of Bipartisanship" by George F. Will, various

May 16, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=51540>)

(WASHINGTON) Bipartisanship, the supposed scarcity of which so distresses the high-minded, actually is disastrously prevalent. Since 2001, it has produced No Child Left Behind, a counterproductive federal intrusion in primary and secondary education; the McCain-Feingold speech rationing law (the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act); an unfunded prescription drug entitlement; troublemaking by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac; government-directed capitalism from the Export-Import Bank; crony capitalism from energy subsidies; unseemly agriculture and transportation bills; continuous bailouts of an unreformed Postal Service; housing subsidies; subsidies for state and local governments; and many other bipartisan deeds, including most appropriations bills.

Now, with Europe's turmoil dramatizing the decadence of entitlement cultures, and with American governments -- federal, state and local -- buckling beneath unsustainable entitlements, Congress is absent-mindedly creating a new entitlement for the already privileged. Concerning the "problem" of certain federal student loans, the two parties pretend to be at daggers drawn, skirmishing about how to "pay for" the "solution." But a bipartisan consensus is congealing: Certain student borrowers -- and eventually all student borrowers, because, well, why not? -- should be entitled to loans at a subsidized 3.4 percent interest rate forever.

In 2006, Democrats, trying to capture control of Congress by pandering to students and their parents, proposed cutting in half the statutory 6.8 percent rate on some federal student loans. Holding Congress in 2007, and with no discernible resistance from the compassionately conservative Bush administration, Democrats disguised the full-decade cost of this -- \$60 billion -- by pretending the subsidy, which now costs \$6 billion a year, would expire in five years.

The five years are up July 1 and of course the 3.4 percent rate will be extended. Barack Obama supports this. So does Mitt Romney, while campaigning against a "government-centered society." What would we do without bipartisanship?

The low 6.8 percent rate -- private loans for students cost about 12 percent -- was itself the result of a federal subsidy. And students have no collateral that can be repossessed in case they default, which 23 percent of those receiving the loans in question do. The maximum loan for third- and fourth-year students is \$5,500 a year. The payment difference between 3.4 percent and 6.8 percent is less than \$10 a month, so the "problem" involves less than 30 cents a day.

The 3.4 percent rate applies only to one category of federal loans, but because the Obama administration has essentially socialized the student loan business, federal loans are 90 percent of student borrowing and this "temporary" rate probably will eventually be made permanent for all federal student loans.

Unsurprisingly, Obama has used this loan issue as an occasion to talk about himself, remembering the "mountain of debt" he and Michelle had when, armed with four Ivy League degrees (he from Columbia, she from Princeton, both from Harvard law), they graduated into the American elite. The Atlantic's Conor Friedersdorf notes that if Washington is feeling flush enough to spend another \$60 billion on education in a decade, it could find more deserving people to subsidize than a privileged minority of college students who are acquiring credentials strongly correlated with higher-than-average future earnings.

The average annual income of high school graduates with no college is \$41,288; for college graduates with just a bachelor's degree it is \$71,552. So the one-year difference (\$30,264) is more than the average total indebtedness of the two-thirds of students who borrow (\$25,250). Taxpayers, most of whom are not college graduates (the unemployment rate for persons with no college: 7.9 percent), will pay \$6 billion a year to make it slightly easier for some fortunate students to acquire college degrees (the unemployment rate for college graduates: 4 percent).

Between now and July, the two parties will pretend that it is a matter of high principle how the government should pretend to "pay for" the \$6 billion while borrowing \$1 trillion this year. But bipartisanship will have been served by putting another entitlement on a path to immortality.

Campaigning recently at Bradley University in Peoria, Romney warned students about their burden from the national debt, but when he took questions, the first questioner had something else on her peculiar mind: "So you're all for like 'yay freedom and all this stuff and yay like pursuit of happiness.' You know what would make me happy? Free birth control." While awaiting that eventual entitlement, perhaps she can land a subsidized loan so she can inexpensively continue to hone her interesting intellect.

[20120517-08](#) 16:49 Dale Video: "13 Investigates: IRS Tax Loophole"

\$ 4 Billion per year! They know about it and don't take action! I know, let's raise taxes to keep paying this out.

Can you understand how a conspiracy theory around Obama's interest in supporting illegal aliens and "buying" their votes could develop? Can you see why many people are disgusted with federal government inefficiency and/or corruption? By the way, which is it?

[Please also see "20120508-06" in FotM Newsletter #134 (May 9, 2012) and subsequent discussion. To me, this is not so much a "loophole" as simply a crime with severe penalties and will either be caught or not, like all crime. I would hope the IRS is extremely diligent in its enforcement efforts, even upon poor illegal aliens, but Republicans have hampered the work by their budget constraints—not seeing the forest for the trees. –SteveB]

Video:

http://www.wthr.com/video?autoStart=true&topVideoCatNo=default&clipId=7054149&goback=%2Egde_114362_m ember_114332814

[20120517-11](#) 19:26 Art Re: "13 Investigates: IRS Tax Loophole" (reply to Dale, above)

Hi Dale, We've all seen this and agree, ugly. On a case by case basis doubt it is cost effective for the IRS to do an audit of each of these individuals, so it needs to be addressed collectively. What puzzles many of us is why this somewhat self righteous Congress has not taken action, since apparently it is in their jurisdiction to take action.

Of course, you are absolutely correct, those who are looking to point fingers will somehow make the President at fault.

[20120517-13](#) 20:26 SteveG Re: "13 Investigates: IRS Tax Loophole" (reply to Dale & Art, above)

Add to this \$4 billion the billions the government is subsidizing major oil companies and the fact that GE gets a tax refund and Bank of America pays zero taxes – a few billion here and a few billion there isn't chump change.

"Tourist Attractions in Bolivia: Ecotourism in Santa Cruz" BoliviaBella.com

May 17, 2012 (<http://networkedblogs.com/xMus7>)



Bolivia Ecotourism is a great way to enjoy the beauty of our planet while not contributing to its destruction. Also called socially responsible touring, it gives you the opportunity to experience first hand how our world must have looked before we existed, and as Bolivia is one of the most biodiverse regions on the planet (known as the 10 mega-diverse regions) it one of the best places in the world to get in touch with Earth's ancient history. The following are some of the many natural gems you can visit in Bolivia's largest state, Santa Cruz in Eastern Bolivia.

Here you can go trekking or rafting, take birdwatching and wildlife observation tours, visit ancient ruins like El Fuerte the pre-Colombian fort near Samaipata (the drive to Samaipata itself is well worth a day-trip) and even experience living history in towns like colonial Buena Vista or the Jesuit Missions where time seems to have stopped and people still live in much the same way as they did hundreds of years ago.

You can also learn about more recent events and people by literally walking the same paths they did, like the Che Guevara trail and visiting other historical monuments, museums, and sites.

Lush, pristine, and virtually unaltered, Bolivia's millions of acres of protected areas and national parks are the perfect place to practice culturally and environmentally conscious touring. Noel Kempff Mercado, Amboró and Kaa Iya national parks, in Eastern Bolivia, are some of the most biologically diverse regions on the planet, as is the Pantanal, the Otuquis Nature Reserve and Puerto Suarez one of the largest wetland ecosystems on the planet. And once you've taken a rain forest cruise on the Amazon River on the Reina de Enin riverboat, your outlook on life will be changed forever.



Because even ecotourism alters our environment I would like to keep beautiful places like Espejillos a secret, but I won't for two reasons:

First, because I also happen to believe the only way to preserve Bolivia's beautiful natural areas is, paradoxically, to give people the chance to experience them in person. I believe your experience will change you in such a phenomenal way that when you leave, you will share with others the importance of preserving these habitats and the species that live within them.

Second, ecotourism is important to Bolivia's economy and benefits the people who act as your tour guides, and provide your meals, accommodations, and transportation. For some families and entire towns, this is their only source of income.

For visitors, this is a chance to learn about, and gain respect for, their local customs and traditions.

So prepare to be amazed! And prepare to be transformed! But the key word here is prepare. Because ecotouring is challenging. You must come with an open mind, be willing to give up some of the comforts you may be used to, and leave behind no evidence of your visit.

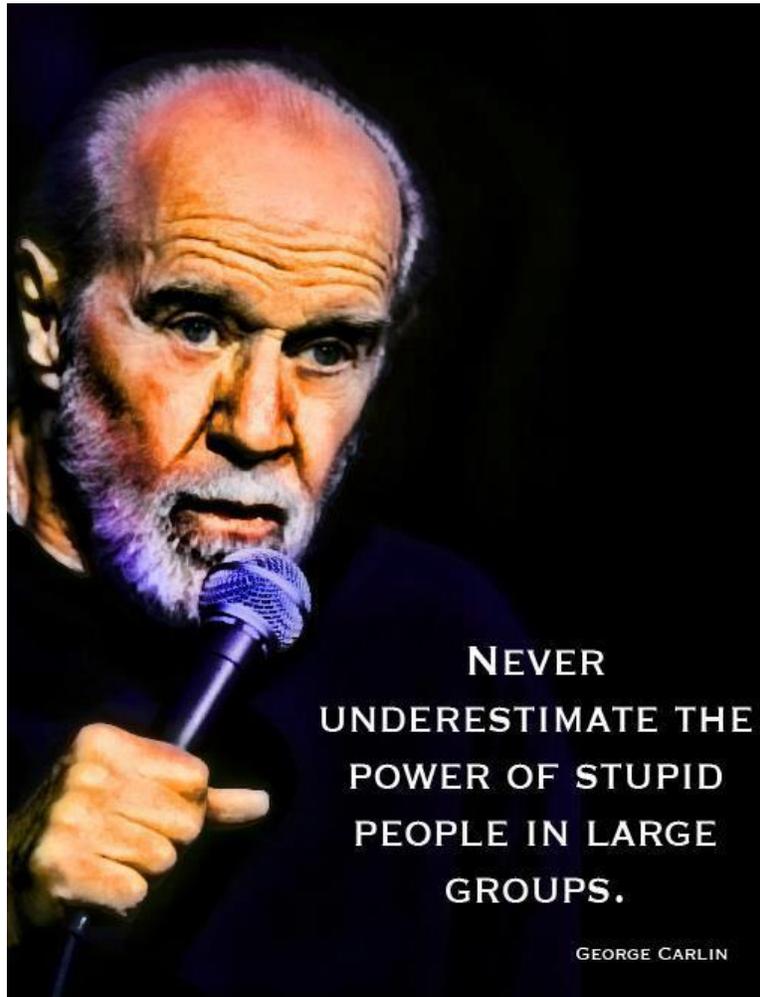
from <http://buburuza.net/2009/02/michelangelos-david/>):

After a two year loan to the United States, Michelangelo's *David* is being returned to Italy.



His proud sponsors were: KFC, McDonalds, Starbucks, and Burger King.

[20120517-15](#) 23:58 SteveG Quote: George Carlin on Groups of Stupid People



<http://environment.nationalgeographic.com/environment/photos/summer-pictures/>

Two swimmers reach for the surface after making it under the breaking wave at Bronte Beach, Sydney, Australia (Mark Tipple).



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

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