



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #143 — MAY 22, 2012

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Your Tax Money for Salvation?

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, May 22, 2012)



The Right starts bouncing off the walls if you bring up the subject of federal money being used for anything to do with abortion. But they don't have any problems taking your tax dollars to push their agenda—as quietly as they possibly can.

And they perform these insidious instructions utilizing what used to be America's stalwart system of public education—now co-opted by evangelicals. But, believe me, home schooling is even scarier (and, once again, your taxes usually pay for at least part of it)!

This kind of "education" (now often called "brain washing") is why our public school system was founded to begin with, and to help maintain the separation of church and state we used to find so desirable.

"10 Frightening Things That Happen at Conservative Christian Schools That May Be Funded with Your Tax Dollars"
by Kristin Rawls, AlterNet

May 17, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/155482/>)

School vouchers have long been a pet cause of Christian school advocates who want to shore up profits and increase their ranks. In 2002, the United States Supreme Court ruled that public funds designated for private school tuition were not an infringement on church/state separation. That gave private Christian school advocates a green light to promote vouchers for themselves.

Though vouchers have become legal in some states, like Ohio, others, like North Carolina, are still holding out. Either way, Christian school advocates show no signs of slowing down their efforts. One reason vouchers remain so contested is that they sometimes fund activities in private Christian schools that many American taxpayers would not want to support. Here are 10 strange things that happen at Christian schools that may give you pause next time vouchers are debated in your state:

1. Inflammatory anti-choice rhetoric.

You might think grade school is a bit young to start learning violent anti-choice rhetoric. Luke Jones, who graduated from an Alabama Church of Christ school in 2004, tells AlterNet it started around the sixth grade. "I remember my English teacher passing around shocking photographs of dismembered babies. That was where I learned about abortion." The pictures that feature in these discussions usually picture late-term fetuses terminated as a result of natural miscarriage. This means that they are not at all reflective of aborted fetuses in general, and give children a skewed – and overly emotive – reaction to a medical service.

Material from a 2005 anti-choice handbook called *Abortion: From Debate to Dialogue* is sometimes used to teach students how to argue with people who are pro-choice. Among the misinformation contained in its pages, the handbook teaches students that serious conditions like preeclampsia, eclampsia, placental previa and placental abruption do not usually endanger a pregnant woman's life. Moreover, it implies, questions about a woman's health are just distractions.

Strategies meant to help anti-choicers seem nice in abortion debates may be practiced in classroom role-playing activities. For example, the handbook says, anti-choice proponents sometimes "appear callous by showing no concern for women who die." Pro-choice advocates, the handbook assures students, sometimes ask about this "to see if you have compassion on the circumstances of women... If you don't show concern for these women in the midst of your response, you lose." In other words, women's well-being is not really the point – anti-choicers must learn to feign compassion for women in order to win arguments.

Some Christian schools use a controversial film – Ray Comfort's *180 Movie* – to insert talking points conflating abortion with the Holocaust.

2. Hands-on anti-choice activism.

Sometimes Christian schools go beyond teaching anti-choice propaganda by encouraging students to get involved in anti-choice activism. Oklahoma's Augustine Christian Academy helped mobilize students to participate in Tulsa's annual March for Life this year. The school's Web site still features information about the January protest that instructed students how to get involved. Some Christian schools even transported students to the much bigger March for Life in Washington, DC. A Catholic school in Lafayette brought

busloads of students to the Capitol for the event. Not only this, but the school made a weeklong field trip of the march that also included a pro-life mass at the National Basilica and a tour of the Mount Saint Mary's and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Shrine, where students would honor saints revered by the Catholic anti-choice movement.

Christian schools also arrange opportunities for students to assist crisis pregnancy centers – that is, anti-choice organizations set up to look like abortion clinics when their real goal is to convince young women to carry their pregnancy to term. Some schools, like Maryland's Connelly School of the Holy Child, feature school clubs that organize fund drives to benefit the centers. Others, like Tri-Cities Christian Schools of Tennessee, encourage students to become directly involved in volunteer work at crisis pregnancy centers in the state, where they may assist with anything from filing to conducting intake interviews.

Some Christian schools even schedule field trips in which students are transported to an abortion clinic for a protest. Fundamentalist homeschoolers throughout the country have been hosting such field trips for years, but Christian schools have taken up the practice more recently. Pro-Life Wisconsin organizes Christian school field trips that include prayer vigils outside abortion clinics.

3. Christian sex-ed.

In the mid- to late-1980s, evangelical Christians began campaigning to promote abstinence-only education in public schools. Though abstinence-only education remains contested in public schools, it has long been the order of the day in Christian schools. Many schools pressure students to take virginity pledges from Passion 2 Purity Pledge or True Love Waits in which they promise never to have sex outside heterosexual marriage.

A South Carolina curriculum called Heritage Keepers teaches that “[s]ex is like fire. Inside the appropriate boundary of marriage, sex is a great thing! Outside of marriage, sex can be dangerous.” Rather than thinking too much about sex, the curriculum encourages students to think about the qualities they desire in a future spouse and to envision what their wedding day might be like. One example, directed at girls: “Your true love stands at the front. This is the man who you have waited for (remained abstinent for) and who has waited for you... This man wants to be strong and courageous for you, to cherish and protect you... You are ready to trust him with all that you have and all that you are, because you have waited (sexually) you have it all to give.”

If that weren't groan-worthy enough, many abstinence-only programs teach objectively false information. Heritage Keepers notably claims that condom use results in pregnancy one in seven times.

A curriculum called Why kNow? tells sixth graders, “WARNING! Going on this ride could change your life forever, result in poverty, heartache, disease, and even DEATH.” At the eighth-grade level, students learn that “premature birth, infant pneumonia, and neonatal eye infections may result from transmission of [Chlamydia] during delivery...” and “If [syphilis] treated (sic) is not received, a pregnant woman will usually transmit the disease to the unborn child. Stillbirth and death within the neonatal period occur in 25% of these cases.”

If evangelicals really believe the consequences of sex are usually this dire, it's no wonder some schools go a step beyond abstinence-only education and encourage students not to date at all. Inspired by a trend in the homeschool movement called “courtship,” a parent-directed, supervised form of dating, some schools use Joshua Harris' popular book, *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*, in their curriculum. Harris makes the unsubstantiated claim that dating – and break-ups – in the teenage years encourage young people to forego committed relationships and may set them up for painful divorce later in life. Courtship proponents also argue that dating is too risky for teens since sexual temptation is too much to bear.

4. Intolerance.

Since September 11, 2001, Christian schools have become increasingly Islamophobic. In 2010, the Texas State Board of Education ignited a national controversy when it “voted to scrub [public school] textbooks of

anything that smacked of a 'pro-Islam' or 'anti-Christian' bias." In other words, public schools would now be required to use school curriculums that whitewash Christians and demonize Muslims. Though relatively new to public education, Islamophobia has long run rampant at Christian schools.

Last May, AlterNet reported that Christian elementary and secondary curriculums A Beka Book, Bob Jones University Publishing, and Accelerated Christian Education teach that Islam is a "false religion." Rethinking Schools reports that Bob Jones curriculum generally provides a surprisingly unbiased look at Islamic history, but sometimes makes wild claims like, "[T]he darkness of Islamic religion keeps the people of Turkey from Jesus Christ as their savior." At the seventh-grade level, A Beka attempts to bolster its case against Islam by claiming, "[O]ver 500 people saw the resurrected Jesus Christ, no one witnessed Mohammed's supposed encounters with the angels." Not only this, but the curriculum also casts Islam as a "fanatically anti-Christian."

Many Christian school teachers also create lesson plans based on the teachings of self-styled "historian" David Barton, who has wasted many, many articles on "anti-Shariah" fear-mongering. At his own Web site, Wallbuilders, Barton waxes paranoid about what he calls President Obama's "preferential treatment of Muslims and Muslim nations" and contrasts this with what he interprets as Obama's "anti-Biblical" positions when, "In fact, there have been numerous clearly documented times when his pro-Islam positions have been the cause of his anti-Biblical actions." Most of his backing "evidence" is pretty vague. For example, Barton alleges that, in August 2010, Obama spoke "with great praise of Islam and condescendingly of Christianity."

5. Punishment by gender.

Teachers in Christian schools sometimes stereotype boys as more rambunctious and rebellious than girls. In practice, this means that boys are often the targets of harsher corporal punishment. In 2007, a Chicago school was sued for injury and surgical costs after a forcing a 14-year-old boy to kneel in place for nine days, causing a hip injury. A few years later, in 2011, a Christian school teacher in Orlando was arrested on charges of beating a boy at her home with a rusted broom handle.

Many Christian schools punish girls more harshly because of perceived sexual acting out. In 2009, a California appeals court upheld a Christian school's decision to expel two female students simply because administrators suspected they were involved in a same-sex relationship. Just last year, a 15-year-old girl was expelled from another California school for writing on Facebook that she was bisexual. Luke Jones tells AlterNet of an incident he remembers from high school, when a boy and girl were caught having sex in a school bathroom. The boy "got suspended for a little while but then came back," but the girl was expelled for the remainder of the school year.

6. Pregnancy expulsions and firings.

Punishing girls who have sex also extends to pregnancy. In recent years, some students have started fighting back with lawsuits on the basis of "civil rights violations due to discrimination based on race, sex and pregnancy." In 2009, Arkansas parents sued their daughter's Christian school when she was expelled for pregnancy. She said she had been treated like she had a "communicable disease." (Ironically, the blowback girls get for out-of-wedlock pregnancies may end up encouraging abortion -- several sources report girls in their schools turning to abortion in order to remain in school.)

In some schools, it's not just students who are punished for getting pregnant out of wedlock. Cathy Samford was a 39-year-old teacher at a Christian school in Texas when she was fired for getting pregnant while in a long-term committed relationship. The school alleged that the award-winning teacher had violated its "morals clause." A New York preschool teacher sued her former school for the same treatment in 2005. The school's justification? A school handbook requiring every teacher to "convey the teachings of the Catholic faith by his or her words or actions." There are no well-publicized cases of male teachers being fired for impregnating adult women.

7. Revisionist evangelical history classes.

In conservative Christian schools, historical events are filtered through the literal Biblical creation story, and can be understood in the context of sin, redemption and "God's plan" for the United States. On its own Web site, Bob Jones boasts that its US history curriculum includes "special attention...to God's providence and America's Christian heritage." A Beka curriculum opens with a full-on endorsement of theocracy, stating, "All governments are ordained by God, but none compare to government by God, theocracy." From there, the curriculum pushes the false belief that the United States was founded as a Christian nation.

The racist history of the United States is usually whitewashed or romanticized in Christian school curriculum. Writing for AlterNet Rachel Tabachnik highlighted the following in a Bob Jones text: "To help them endure the difficulties of slavery, God gave Christian slaves the ability to combine the African heritage of song with the dignity of Christian praise. Through the Negro spiritual, the slaves developed the patience to wait on the Lord and discovered that the truest freedom is from the bondage of sin." Another A Beka textbook says, "A few slave holders were undeniably cruel. Examples of slaves beaten to death were not common, neither were they unknown. The majority of slave holders treated their slaves well." Even the Klan gets whitewashed. A Bob Jones textbook states that "the Klan in some areas of the country tried to be a means of reform, fighting the decline in morality and using the symbol of the cross to target bootleggers, wife beaters and immoral movies."

These curriculums also engage in a fair amount of Red Scare tactics. Liberalism is conflated with socialism, and a liberal is said to be "a person who believes government should have more control over people's lives[;] that government through taxes should provide for more of people's needs[;] and that Biblical traditional values are not strong considerations." The same curriculum teaches that every social welfare program in US history is evidence of "creeping socialism." In the editors' own words, "A serious flaw developed in American culture during the Cold War period as America began to drift away from the institutions and heritage that made her great. For example, the US government continued to move toward socialism following the 'New Deal'; under the Kennedy, Johnson, and Carter administrations, government spending grew enormously as welfare programs sapped the economy and resulted in a heavier tax burden upon the American people."

8. Creationism-only science.

Many Christian schools teach young earth Christian creationism – that is, the idea that God literally created the earth, humans and animals in seven days, all of 4,000 years ago – in lieu of learning about evolution. A Beka boasts that its "Science and Health Program presents the universe as the direct creation of God and refutes the man-made idea of evolution."

Kentucky's Creation Museum hosts field trips for Christian school groups. Its Web site boasts that "thousands of students like yours have received answers to the tough questions they face in today's culture."

Christian author and blogger Rachel Held Evans has written critically about the fact that she never learned anything about evolution over the course of her Christian education. When she found the information years later she "felt betrayed – by my teachers, by my church, by my culture."

9. Ridiculous dress codes, mostly for girls.

The idea that modest dress among girls tempers teen hormones is magical thinking, but it has never gone out of fashion at Christian schools. As a result, these schools maintain strict dress codes, especially for female students. A California school made headlines in 2005 for enforcing a dress code on its cheerleaders to make them seem more "wholesome." That meant skirts no more than four inches raised above the knees. One school in Indiana doesn't even allow dresses during school. Instead, girls have to wear jumpers and skirts of a "boxy character with no slits." Several other sources report knee-length skirts and loose, boxy tops. Though the regulations differ from school to school, their purpose remains the same -- to somehow prevent boys from entertaining lustful thoughts about their female peers. [Not an entirely bad idea. Catholic schools do it world-wide. It seems a silly thing to condemn here. –SteveB]

10. Proms without dancing. [Come on, though stupid, is this really a serious problem? –SteveB]

Christian schools often have pretty strong opinions about dancing. They tend to be against it. The original *Footloose* film, in which Kevin Bacon challenges a school's prohibition on dancing, seems extremely dated to most contemporary viewers. But in 2009, an Ohio student was suspended from his Christian school for attending a public school prom. Respected evangelical publication Christianity Today explains that objection to dancing among Christians started in the very beginning: "[D]ance played a prominent role in many pagan cults, such as the orgiastic cult of Dionysius. Because early Christians in no way wished to be associated with such rites, they most likely avoided dancing in church, though their intense, sometimes ecstatic worship...may well have included motions of some sort. Christians avoided social dancing, too, as it was usually associated with drinking and sexual immorality in Roman culture."

Even now, a quick Internet search for the term "Christian prom" turns up a host of ongoing evangelical debates about whether or not Christian students should be permitted to attend a secular prom and/or dance in any social context. But how are these regulations keeping up with loosening cultural mores? Luke Jones says that his fundamentalist school prohibited "all forms of social dancing," but that this led to some very odd rituals. Every year, his school held "what they called a Junior/Senior Banquet." Students "would get together a fancy menu, dress up with all the same stuff you'd have at a normal prom with a corsage and boutonniere," but there would be no dancing. He says the affair was "pretty starched" – that is, until what came next. When it was over, students would leave the premises, and "there would usually be a second event that was an unofficial addition to the banquet. It was usually hosted nearby in a different venue. In our case, it was held across the street in a different hotel." What came next was "just the dancing part of prom. You'd walk into a room, and there was the dance floor, and everybody was dancing." The school did not formally sanction this event, but because social attitudes were changing, it didn't try to prevent it either. Parents hosted the ostensibly salacious dancing event, allowing the school to relax its approach to the rules without changing them on paper.

Supporters of school vouchers usually speak in very broad terms about supporting "religious schools," but they are often reluctant to talk specifics. Instead, they prefer to focus on intellectual niche schools that focus, for example, on classical education or fine arts. That is because of, as you can see, the peculiar beliefs and behaviors documented at these schools. It would be an exaggeration to argue that all private Christian schools provide a poor education, but **perhaps we need to think twice about spending public money diverted from public schools to private religious schools.**

(Kristin Rawls is a freelance writer whose work has also appeared in the *Christian Science Monitor*, *GOOD Magazine*, *Religion Dispatches*, *Killing the Buddha*, *Global Comment* and elsewhere online.)

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20120521-01	07:46	MarthaH	"A Mormon Moment"
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"Column: A Mormon Moment" by Stephen Prothero, *USA Today*

May 21, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/forum/story/2012-05-20/romney-mormon-evangelicals-liberty-commencement/55096402/1>)

(Romney: "We can meet in service, in shared moral convictions about our nation stemming from a common worldview," he says this month at a commencement ceremony.)

(On Religion: Faith. Religion. Spirituality. Meaning. In our ever-shrinking world, the tentacles of religion touch everything from governmental policy to individual morality to our basic social constructs. It affects the lives of people of great faith — or no faith at all. This series of weekly columns — launched in 2005 — seeks to illuminate the national conversation.)

On the final exam for an American religion class I taught this spring, I asked my Boston University students to offer Mitt Romney some unsolicited advice on how to talk to the American public about his Mormon faith.

He needs it. In many respects, Mormons have become quintessentially American, yet "gentiles" (as Mormons call the rest of us) remain wary. Evangelicals often view the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as an unchristian "cult," and many liberals are at least as uncomfortable with the idea of a Mormon president. What to do?

Most of my students told me that the former Massachusetts governor could not sidestep "TMT," as his 2008 presidential team referred to "That Mormon Thing." He should discuss his faith in a heartfelt manner. But he should steer clear of its controversial history and unusual beliefs and rituals. What is to be gained from addressing Mormons' rejection of the Trinity, their baptisms of dead Holocaust victims, or their founder Joseph Smith (who also ran for president)? Romney should emphasize morality instead, my students said, underscoring the convergence of Mormonism and Christianity on "family values."

Earlier this month Romney traveled to Lynchburg, Va., to deliver a much-anticipated commencement address at Liberty University, an evangelical mecca founded by televangelist Jerry Falwell. He followed my students' advice to a tee.

Romney salted his remarks with evangelicalese, referring to the "purpose-driven life" and to God standing at the door of our hearts and knocking. He spoke repeatedly of Christ, Christians and Christianity. In fact, in one sentence, he praised a Methodist (John Wesley), an Anglican (William Wilberforce), a Lutheran (Dietrich Bonhoeffer), a Catholic (John Paul II) and a Baptist (Billy Graham). But he never mentioned a Mormon. In fact, Mormonism appears in this speech only as the faith that dare not speak its name.

Differences run deep

In my book *God Is Not One*, I argued that the differences between the world's religions run deep. Many evangelicals e-mailed me to say they agreed. They are perfectly willing to debate the Bible with skeptics, they told me, but they are flummoxed by those who short-circuit that debate by proclaiming on faith that the world's religions are different paths up the same mountain.

In a key passage in his commencement address, Romney acknowledged the theological differences between Mormonism and evangelicalism, only to move on to their ethical similarities. "People of different faiths, like yours and mine, sometimes wonder where we can meet in common purpose, when there are so many differences in creed and theology," he said. "Surely, the answer is that we can meet in service, in shared moral convictions about our nation stemming from a common worldview."

This surprising admission of theological differences is one reason why evangelicals have moved so quickly to embrace a Mormon as their man. But it is not the only reason.

Divided denominations

Twenty-five years ago, sociologist Robert Wuthnow observed that American religion is no longer divided along denominational lines. Instead, each denomination is itself divided into liberals and conservatives. The contagion of partisan politics has infected our religious institutions, Wuthnow wrote, converting groups that used to debate baptism and the Trinity into groups that debate homosexuality and abortion.

This is a sad development for people like me, who prefer the conversations about the Incarnation, which animated the Episcopal Church of my youth, to conversations about gay bishops. But it should be music to the ears of Romney's supporters. Not so long ago, Romney would have had to explain Mormon theology to voters in some detail. But now that religion has collapsed almost entirely into morality, all he has to do is assure us that its values are compatible with our own.

I do not want liberals or evangelicals to use this election as an excuse to attack the Mormon faith. I am glad there is no religious test in the Constitution, and I would be happy to call a Mormon (or a Hindu) my president. But I am chagrined to see our public square stripped of real religious conversation. Has the religious right pushed so hard to reinvest our politics with religion only to turn our religion into politics? Did Jesus take on a human body in order to tell us that homosexuality is wrong?

This is Romney's moment. But it is also a Mormon moment. At least for now, evangelicals seem to have heard enough about Romney's faith. But given how little most Americans know about the LDS church, I suspect other voters are going to want to know more before they decide whether to replace the nation's first black president with its first Mormon one.

As we head toward November, lots of people will doubtless step up to answer their questions. One of them ought to be Mitt Romney.

(Stephen Prothero is a professor in Boston University's religion department and the author of *The American Bible: How Our Words Unite, Divide, and Define a Nation*.)

20120521-02	10:21	Art	"A Choice of Capitalisms"
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Bain...

There's a lot I really dislike about Romney, in fact the more I learn the less I think of him, but as far as Bain Capital goes, he apparently did a very good job. His job was to make money for his investors and he did that, substantially.

The question for the rest of us then is, is what he learned and the skills he demonstrated at Bain Capital what the country needs? I would argue that those skills were not those of building but rather skills of dismembering. His arguments that he created jobs are specious and have been discounted by virtually everyone. His task was not to create jobs but rather to earn lots of money for his investors. Any incidental job creation was just that, incidental. I seriously doubt any of those investors, nor Romney at the time, was interested in sacrificing one penny of profit for themselves in the interest of job creation for others. {Excellent, excellent point! –SteveB}

Article from *Washington Post* below does a better job of explaining this.

"A Choice of Capitalisms" by E.J. Dionne Jr., *The Washington Post*

May 20, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/a-choice-of-capitalisms/2012/05/20/gIQA2h31dU_story.html)

(Why adopting Bain Capital's values is insane for a national candidate.)

In this election, we're not having an argument that pits capitalism against socialism. We are trying to decide what kind of capitalism we want. It is a debate as American as Alexander Hamilton, Andrew Jackson and Henry Clay — which is to say that we have always done this. In light of the rise of inequality and the financial mess we just went through, it's a discussion we very much need to have now.

The back-and-forth about Bain Capital, Mitt Romney's old company, is part of something larger. So is the inquest into the implications of multibillion-dollar trading losses at JPMorgan Chase. Capitalism can produce wonders. It is also capable of self-destruction, and it can leave a lot of wounded people behind. The trick is to get the most out of what capitalism does well, while containing or preventing the problems it can cause.

To describe this grand debate is not to deny that President Obama's campaign has some, shall we say, narrower motives in going after Bain. Obama's lieutenants need to undermine Romney's claim that his experience in the private equity business makes him just the guy to get our economy back on track.

The Bain conversation has already been instructive. Romney's friends no less than his foes have had to face the fact that Bain's purpose was never about job-creation. Its goal was to generate large returns to Bain's partners and investors. It did that, which is why Romney is rich.

Romney wants to focus on the positive side of his business dealings that did create jobs. He wants to brag about the companies Bain helped bring to life, among them Staples, Sports Authority and Domino's.

That's fair enough. But having made an issue of Bain on the plus side, he also has to answer for the pain and suffering — or, as defenders of capitalism like to call it, the "creative destruction" — that some of Bain's deals left in their wake.

This leads naturally to the question of how creative the destruction wrought by our current brand of capitalism actually is. Since the dawn of the leveraged buyout era three decades ago, many friends of capitalism have questioned whether loading companies with debt as part of these deals is good for companies and for the economy as a whole.

Does this approach cause unnecessary suffering among the employees of the companies in question and the communities that often lose plants and jobs as a result? Sucking pension and health funds dry to aggrandize investors seems less like a creative act than a betrayal of workers who made bargains with their employers in good faith.

More generally, while some of the innovations in the financial sphere have been beneficial to growth, it's far from clear that this is true of all or even most of them. Some of them helped cause the downturn we are still trying to escape and created incentives for the dangerous risk-taking that led to JPMorgan's troubles. And there's little doubt that our new financial system has transferred wealth from other sectors of the economy to the people at the top of the financial business.

Vice President Biden's speech last week in Youngstown, Ohio, drew wide attention for its criticism of Romney as someone who just doesn't "get it." But when Biden moved beyond Romney, he offered an energetic broadside against the new world of finance, and he picked the right venue to make his case: a noble blue-collar town that has been battered by the winds of globalization and economic change.

"You know the difference between having an economy that makes things that the rest of the world wants, and having an economy that is based on financialization of every product," Biden told his listeners. "You know the difference between an economy . . . that's built on making things rather than on collateralized debt, creative credit-default swaps, financial instruments like subprime mortgages. That's not how you build an economy."

Romney, by contrast, is wary of dismantling any of these nifty new Wall Street inventions, one reason why he wants to repeal the Dodd-Frank financial reforms.

We need to have this great national argument. To borrow a term pioneered by Germany's Christian Democrats, we can try to build a social market. Or we can have an anti-social market. An election is the right venue for deciding which it will be.

20120521-05	11:47	GaryF	"A Choice of Capitalisms"
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Will Bain values ruin Romney? Mitt Romney embraces his own destruction...

"A Choice of Capitalisms" by E.J. Dionne Jr., *The National Memo*

May 21, 2012, (<http://www.nationalmemo.com/a-choice-of-capitalisms/>)

20120521-03	10:42	Art	Video: "Who Are the Job Creators?"
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This pretty thought provoking, if you have not seen it...

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bBx2Y5HhplI&feature=player_embedded.

20120521-04	11:25	Pam	Re: "Who Are the Job Creators?" (reply to Art, above)
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This is great, Art. I'm going to forward it to my libertarian, right-wing friend.

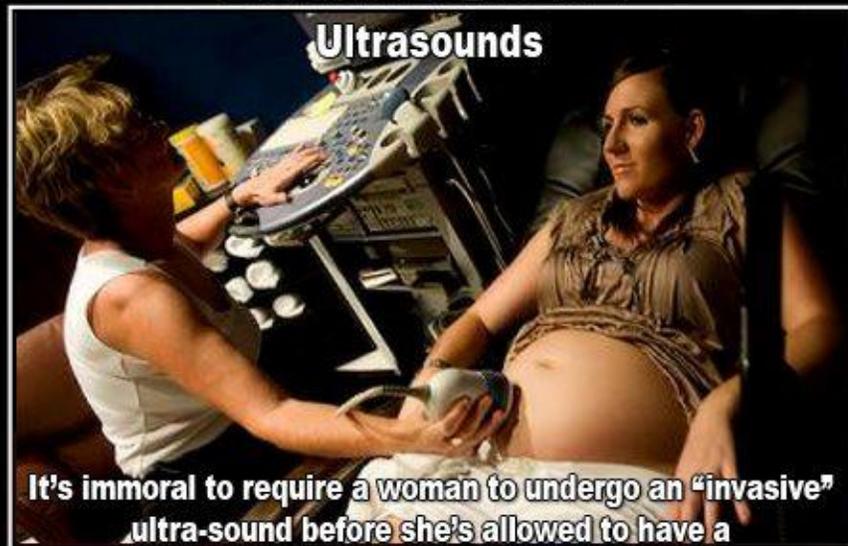
20120521-06	13:31	Dennis	"Standard Right-Wing Propaganda"
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"Standard Right-Wing Propaganda" by Justin "Filthy Liberal Scum" Rosario, *Addicting Info*

May 20, 2012, (<http://www.addictinginfo.org/2012/05/20/propaganda/>)

I try not to pay attention to these things but sometimes the stupid is so thick I just can't resist.

Liberal Logic 101



It's immoral to require a woman to undergo an "invasive" ultra-sound before she's allowed to have a "totally non-invasive" abortion performed on herself.

(And we'll pretend having an innocent baby murdered is not immoral)

<http://LiberalLogic101.com>

(Yes, they are that stupid)

What you have here is the usual deliberate distortion from the right. And it IS deliberate. It's possible that the person who made this picture is actually so profoundly ignorant that they think this is accurate but I seriously doubt it. After months of the phrase "trans-vaginal ultrasound" being tossed around and the magical power of the internet that can show what that is as quickly as you can type it, I can only conclude that the point is to mislead gullible idiots. How else would a person confuse a regular ultrasound for a T-V ultrasound?

Just so you know, this particular picture was posted on April 21, long after the controversy started.

A further deliberate distortion is that liberals think abortion is "non-invasive." This insinuates that we think it is no big deal. Nobody thinks this. We think it's a traumatic and heart-wrenching decision to make but absolutely private and no one else's business. Our goal is to make them safe and as rare as possible.

Conservatives think pregnancy is a divine punishment for women having sex and want to do everything they can to ensure as many "punishment pregnancies" possible. Why else do you think they oppose contraception and sex-ed so bitterly? This is how the right debases political and moral debates in this country.

Liberals say, "We want to keep violent criminals from buying guns" and a conservative will claim we said, "Ban all guns." Liberals say, "We want everyone to have access to healthcare" and a conservative will claim we said, "Kill the sick and elderly." Liberals say, "America is open to all religions, not just Christianity" and a conservative will claim we said, "Ban Christianity and the Bible."

This is how people who are afraid to confront their own failings respond. Rather than simply admit their greed or fear or prejudice, they mischaracterize our positions to make it easier on their conscience when they oppose us. If conservatives would only be honest about their motivations, we could have an honest conversation but that will never happen as long as the political platform of the right is built on hate and anger.

(Feel free to tell me what a terrible person I am at Proudtobeafilthyliberalscum.com or follow me on Twitter @FilthyLbrlScum.)

"How the Ultra-Rich Betray America" by Paul Buchheit, NationofChange

May 21, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/how-ultra-rich-betray-america-1337616055>)

The betrayals come in many forms. Here are a few of the more outrageous, and destructive, examples:

Evasion: Corporations suddenly stopped meeting their tax responsibilities

While corporate profits have doubled to \$1.9 trillion in less than ten years, the corporate income tax rate, which for thirty years hovered around the 20-25% level, suddenly dropped to 10% after the recession. It has remained there for three years.

We are seeing a manifestation of the Shock Doctrine. Corporations are using the national emergency of the financial collapse to make a statement about taxes, and a traumatized nation is too preoccupied to do anything about it.

Delusion: Technology companies won't admit that much of their 'innovation' is due to public assistance

According to the report Funding a Revolution, government provided almost half of basic research funds into the 1980s. Federal funding still accounted for half of research in the communications industry as late as 1990. Even today, the federal government supports about 60 percent of the research performed at universities.

Apple's first computer was introduced in the late 1970s. Apple still does most of its product and research development in the United States, with US-educated engineers and computer scientists.

Google's business is based on the Internet, which started as ARPANET, the Defense Department's Advanced Research Projects Agency computer network from the 1960s. The National Science Foundation funded the Digital Library Initiative research at Stanford University that was adopted as the Google model.

Apple got its tax bill down to 9.8% last year. About 2/3 of its profits remain overseas for tax avoidance purposes. Google, like Apple, avoids taxes by moving most of its foreign profits through Ireland and the Netherlands to Bermuda. Both Apple and Google, along with Microsoft and Cisco, are lobbying for a repatriation tax holiday to allow billions of overseas dollars to come home at a greatly reduced tax rate.

An Apple executive said: "We don't have an obligation to solve America's problems." That may be true, but they do have an obligation to pay the taxes that help America solve its problems.

Desertion: The people who benefit most from government are renouncing their citizenships to avoid taxes

Perhaps the ultimate insult to America is to just quit on your country after making a fortune off of it. In 2011 almost 1,800 Americans gave up their citizenship to avoid taxes.

The wealthy benefit disproportionately from property and inheritance laws, contracts, stock exchanges, favorable SEC regulations, the Small Business Administration, patent and copyright and intellectual property laws, estate planning, trust funds, Internet marketing, communications infrastructure, highway maintenance, air traffic control, local and national security, and 60 years of research in technology and other industries.

A recent outrageous example is Facebook part-owner Eduardo Saverin, whose family came to America from Brazil partly for safety reasons, and who happened to land Mark Zuckerberg as a roommate at Harvard. Now after falling into billions, he's decided to renounce his U.S. citizenship to avoid taxes.

Denial: Traders feel it's inappropriate to pay even a tiny tax on a quadrillion dollars in sales

A quadrillion dollars sounds like a fake amount. But it's all too real. That's a thousand trillion dollars of derivatives transactions which, along with the high-frequency computer-generated transactions (5,000 per second) that make up over half of U.S. stock trades, contributed to a financial meltdown and a \$3 trillion bailout for reckless trading.

But there's no tax on these transactions.

While average Americans pay a 10% sales tax on necessities, millionaire investors pay just a .00002% SEC fee (2 cents for every thousand dollars) for a financial instrument. And their supporters claim, inexplicably after the disastrous trading frenzy in 2008, that a tax would increase volatility.

Illusion: The media leads us to believe we should all be cheering when the stock market is booming

Conservatives insultingly assure us that the "democratization of stock ownership" is gradually making America more equal, as evidenced by the flattening of wealth ownership among the richest 1% in recent years. So we should all be excited about a rising stock market.

Here are the facts. Data from Edward Wolff confirms that from 1983 to 2007 the percentages of net worth and financial wealth for the top 1% remained steady. But the percentages for the rest of the richest 5% increased by almost 20%, while the percentages for the lowest 80% of the population DECREASED by almost 20%.

In other words, the share of wealth owned by the top 1% leveled off because the "democratization of stock ownership" spread the wealth among just 5% of the population, those earning an average of \$500,000 per year. A few people -- 5 out of 100 -- got very rich, but everyone else lost ground.

Conclusion

The issues are difficult to address with Congress largely on the side of the wealthy.

At the very least [we need to]:

1. **Eliminate the tax break on unearned income (capital gains).** The richest Americans, who own most of the stocks, should not pay a smaller tax than everyone else.
2. **Implement a small financial transactions tax.** It would be easy to administer on computer trades, it would generate hundreds of billions of dollars in revenue, and it would help guard against the reckless speculation that devastated the financial markets and our country.

20120521-08	14:42	Art	"Tanks, Jets or Scholarships?"
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Interesting article.

"Tanks, Jets or Scholarships?" by Thomas L. Friedman, *The New York Times*

May 1, 2012, (<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/02/opinion/friedman-tanks-jets-or-scholarships.html>)

(AMMAN, Jordan) And so it came to pass that in 2012 — a year after the Arab awakening erupted — the United States made two financial commitments to the Arab world that each began with the numbers 1 and 3.

It gave Egypt's military \$1.3 billion worth of tanks and fighter jets, and it gave Lebanese public-school students a \$13.5 million merit-based college scholarship program that is currently putting 117 Lebanese kids through local American-style colleges that promote tolerance, gender and social equality, and critical thinking. I've recently been

to Egypt, and I've just been to Lebanon, and I can safely report this: The \$13.5 million in full scholarships has already bought America so much more friendship and stability than the \$1.3 billion in tanks and fighter jets ever will.

So how about we stop being stupid? How about we stop sending planes and tanks to a country where half the women and a quarter of the men can't read, and start sending scholarships instead?

I am on a swing through the Arab world right now, and I am spending as much time as I can with public schoolteachers and students — and young Arabs doing technology start-ups — and as little time as possible with officials. It derives from my conviction about what really propelled the Tunis and Tahrir Square revolutions: Arab youths — 70 percent of this region is under 30 — who were humiliated and frustrated that they were being left behind. This Arab awakening was their way of saying: We want the freedom, the voice, the educational tools, the jobs and the uncorrupted government *to realize our full potential*. That's what sparked this revolution.

Yes, the various Muslim Brotherhoods have exploited the opening created by these uprisings because they were the most organized parties. But if the Islamists don't respond to the real drivers of this revolution — that yearning for education and jobs and the dignity they bring — they, too, will eventually face a rebellion.

If America wants to connect with the real aspirations of these revolutions, it will expand to other Arab awakening countries the \$13.5 million U.S. Agency for International Development scholarship program begun in Lebanon. And, by the way, hats off to President Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah and the members of Congress who got this program going.

Iran is building dams and roads around Lebanon, decorated with "Thank You, Iran" signs. But no one is standing in line here to go to Tehran University. They still line up for American scholarships, though — one requirement of which is that winners have to do community service, so we are also helping to build better citizens.

The American Embassy in Beirut introduced me to four of this year's Lebanese scholarship students — who attend either the Lebanese American University or Haigazian University, which offer modern U.S.-style bachelor's degrees.

Israa Yassin, 18, from the village of Qab Elias, who is studying computer science, told me: "This whole program is helping to make the youth capable of transforming this country into what it should be and can be. We are good, and we have the capabilities and we can do a lot, but we don't get the chance. My brother just finished high school, and he could not afford [university]. His future is really stopped. The U.S. is giving us a chance to make a difference. I do believe if we are given the chance, we can excel. ... We will not be underestimated anymore. It is really sad when you see a whole generation in Lebanese villages — hundreds of guys doing nothing — no work, not going to college."

After getting the U.S. scholarship, said Yassin, "my family and my community feel differently about America. Why would they hate someone who is helping them?"

Word of the American scholarships has spread quickly; the program is now being swamped with applications for next year, a majority from young women. Wissal Chaaban, 18, from Tripoli, also attending the Lebanese American University and studying marketing, told me: "We have a lot of talent in the Middle East, and young people do not feel appreciated. They feel their voice is shut down and not heard enough."

This program is in America's interest, she said, because it sends young people to colleges that "encourage openness, to accept the other, no matter how different, even if he was from another religion."

I wish my government was giving more scholarships to Americans, but since we budget this money specifically for foreign aid, let's use it intelligently. We can still give military aid — but in the right proportion.

While in Amman, I interviewed some public schoolteachers at Jordan's impressive Queen Rania Teacher Academy, which works with a team from Columbia University to upgrade teaching skills. We talked about the contrast between the \$13.5 million in U.S. scholarships and the \$1.3 billion in military aid, and Jumana Jabr, an English teacher in an Amman public school, summed it up better than I ever could:

One is “for making people,” she said, “and the other is for killing people.” If America wants to spend money on training soldiers, she added, well, “teachers are also soldiers, so why don’t you spend the money training us? We’re the ones training the soldiers you’re spending the \$1.3 billion on.”

Correction: May 2, 2012

(An earlier version of this column used the wrong name for a university in Lebanon that received scholarships for U.S.-style bachelor’s degrees. It is the Lebanese American University, not the Lebanese Arab University.)

20120521-09	17:11	SteveB	From the Right: “2012 GOP Platform Must Aim to Restore American Innovation”
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If you want to know what lies the Republicans will be telling in the future, just read the lies Newt is telling now:

“2012 GOP Platform Must Aim to Restore American Innovation” by Newt Gingrich, *Human Events*

May 21, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=51608>)

Jobs and work must be at the heart of the Republican platform in 2012, just as they’re at the heart of what makes America exceptional.

[But, Newt, Republicans don’t believe the government has any connection to jobs. Jobs are solely created by the rich out of the kindness of their hearts, just to give the poor something to do to keep them out of trouble and add meaning to their lives. What heroes Newt and his friends are! –SteveB]

After three years of President Obama, we’re in danger of losing these important values. The current economy has been so bad for so long that it is undermining the very fabric of American life. The prolonged economic downturn and destruction of jobs by high taxes, massive over-regulation, and class warfare has forced more and more Americans into dependence on government.

[That darned President Obama is destroying everything by...by...let me think...by being black, I guess. That blackness can really be a dangerous thing, I guess. –SteveB]

President Obama’s policies, ostensibly solutions to these problems, have in truth focused on making people even more dependent on an even larger government. Under the Obama model, for instance, unemployment benefits and food stamps are satisfactory compensation for the president’s own job-killing policies. Similarly, the president’s health care law is praised for providing young people the chance to remain on their parents’ health insurance until they are 26—a dependency made necessary only by the fact that so many young people are unable to get jobs in the Obama economy.

These changes are in accordance with the left’s vision for America, in which dependence on the government is a legitimate lifestyle—even desirable.

A fundamentally different sense

Conservatives have a fundamentally different sense of the importance of independence, work, and jobs. It is up to us point out these moral and cultural failures of the left, and to respond with a platform for a dynamic, job creating, and prosperous economy. As conservatives, we believe a free society must be built on self-reliant individuals and their families, working together in a free economy. The centrality of work to that vision is one of the values that has always defined Americans.

At the very beginning, in 1608 at the Jamestown colony, aristocrats told their leader, Captain John Smith, that their contract provided for maintenance without effort. They argued their payment to come to the New World exempted them from any work requirement.

Faced with this legal argument, Captain Smith resorted to first principles and objective reality. In effect he told them there were too few resources to have freeloaders. He warned, "If you don't work, you don't eat." In asserting this principle of the necessity of work, John Smith cited Biblical precedent—specifically, a letter from Paul, Silas, and Timothy (Second Thessalonians 3:10) in which they assert, "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

More than 250 years later, this centrality of effort in a free society was captured in our Declaration of Independence when the founding fathers wrote that "we are endowed by our Creator" with "the right to pursue happiness."

They did not suggest that we had a guarantee of happiness.

They did not suggest that there should be an equal distribution of happiness.

They did not propose a new right to be happy.

They suggested Americans had a right to "pursue" the possibility of happiness.

It is this connection of big dreams with hard work that has made the American experience unique. Here, everyone has a chance. Everyone can dream of being a first generation millionaire, a movie star, a president.

Strong work ethic

As conservatives, we want every American make the best of their God-given rights to pursue happiness. The pursuit of happiness requires a strong work ethic. A strong work ethic requires work.

Work is one of the most important components of the liberty we enjoy in America. With a job comes a paycheck. With a paycheck comes the freedom to make moral choices about what to buy, what to save, and what kind of lifestyle to follow. Those are big choices, and it's the job that makes them possible.

Without them—with an unemployed, passive, dependent America—we are inherently less free. The fact is a person who is working has far more control over their life and their choices than someone who is unemployed, relying on food stamps and maybe living in public housing.

Dependence is destructive

This is why the very basic framework of a healthy society relies on work and jobs. And conservatives understand that this means jobs are not merely an economic issue, but also a social issue and a key building block of the American constitutional experience.

We want strong families in America. They're a central pillar of our society. But for families to remain strong, for people to be able take care of their families and themselves, they have to have jobs. Families require incomes to be stable. Today, economic stress is a major factor in all too many marriages.

And if we want strong families, our policies have to favor a full employment society. President Reagan saw this clearly, and asserted over and over "the best social program is a job." Because when families have solid incomes they can plan for the future and sustain the present.

The conservative belief in the power of work and independence to liberate people was at the heart of the 1996 welfare reform. By then, Americans had reached the conclusion that giving people money to do nothing was actually destructive.

The long debate had begun 30 years earlier, in 1966, when Ronald Reagan—then a candidate for governor—proposed dramatic reform in the very principle of welfare. Later, Charles Murray’s brilliant book *Losing Ground* proved that dependence was destructive.

Marvin Olasky’s insightful *The Tragedy of American Compassion* outlined with compelling clarity that 19th century reformers would have been appalled and dismayed by the modern welfare state. The genuine reformers who devoted their lives to saving the poor had hated rich people who visited the slums to give unearned money to the poor. In the reformers’ analysis, unearned money simply increased dependency, weakened personal initiative and subsidized addiction.

In effect, the welfare state had systematized and vastly expanded the redistribution of wealth to the poor. And that transfer had led to precisely the dependency on government and the decay of moral fiber the 19th century reformers would have predicted.

So in 1996, welfare reforms shifted the system from teaching dependence to teaching self-reliance. It shifted from subsidizing indolence to rewarding effort.

When two out of every three people on welfare left for a job or training, it was clear the new conservative reform was working. But the entire focus of the welfare reform program was to allow people to succeed for themselves in a full employment economy. Government is just as destructive when its job-killing policies make it impossible for people to get jobs.

Conservatives promise a future of lower taxes, more innovation, and full employment, in which you can have a job so you can provide for your family and for civil society.

President Obama believes this vision—one the founding fathers’ shared with us—is obsolete. He instead promises a future in which government will take from someone else to give to you. He believes his borrowed vision of massive government financed with massive debt and punishing the successful by taking their money to “redistribute” it is the wave of the future.

[Well...the first part is what all governments do, including those of Republicans. The second part is what Republicans did to America when they had power from 2001 to 2009. President Obama inherited it. Let’s get that straight, Newt. –SteveB]

But Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s classic critique of socialism—“You run out of other people’s money to spend”—gets to the heart of why the president’s policies will inevitably fail. His model is a tsunami of debt, bureaucracy, corruption, and incompetence doomed to crash.

[President Obama or George Bush and Dick Cheney??? Study history, Mr. Professor! –SteveB]

These are the sharp moral and practical distinctions the Republican platform must draw out. The choice between an America of work and independence and an America of unemployment and dependence is the defining fight of our time.

[This is nothing but a bullsh*t lie meant to distract the electorate from the real problems, which are Republican in nature. –SteveB]

It is politically, historically, and morally the right centerpiece for the 2012 election.

20120521-10	21:47	SteveG	Fw: Dennis Kucinich: “Peace Depends on All of Us”
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from Dennis Kucinich:

As we begin a transition for our movement to work from outside Congress, it is worth remembering that the cause of peace does not depend upon any of us having a certificate of election.

Indeed, in the past week, the House approved the "National Defense Authorization Act" which authorizes a continuation of War in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Yemen and preparation for war against Iran. Additionally, arms reductions agreements with Russia were set back. Maybe Washington is ready to spend endless blood and treasure on endless war, but I do not believe Main Street is.

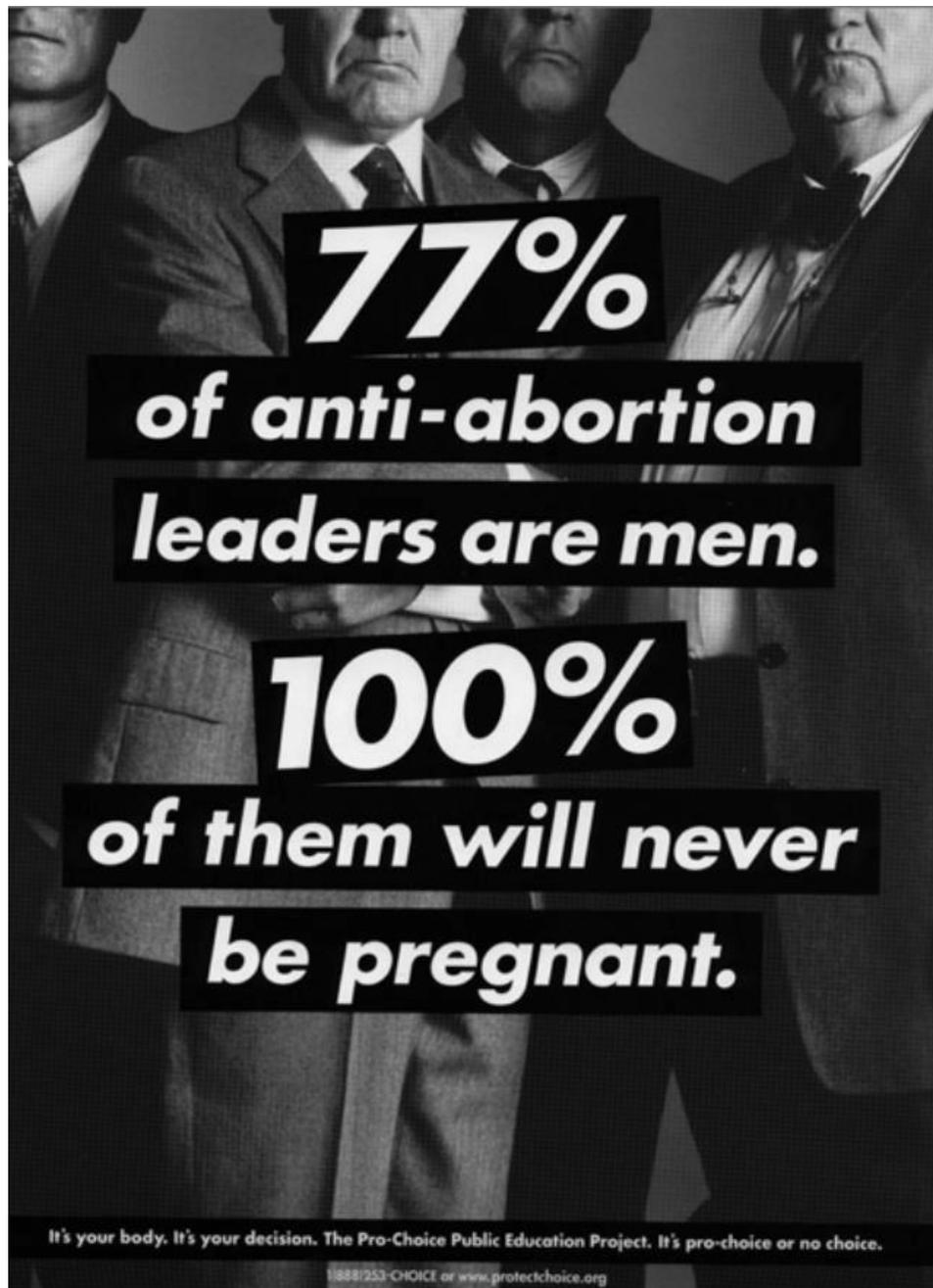
We need to instill in our fellow citizens the capacity to challenge our government to stop wasting lives and money on the foolish policy of permanent war for permanent peace.

We must use our nation's resources to build our lives at home.

The idea of a Department of Peace is to demonstrate that Americans have the ability and the desire to develop a capacity for peace-building at home and abroad.

Sunday's Washington Post article misses the point. Peace-building isn't about just one of us -- one leader or member of Congress. It's about every one of us. What do you think? Let's plan on continuing to work together to build new structures of peace. Please send me your comments and share this email on Facebook and Twitter to help us continue to grow this movement for peace.

Sincerely, Dennis (<http://kucinich.us/media/peace-depends-all-us#.T7rL2P682BA.twitter>)



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

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