



“Challenging People to Shape a Better Future Now”

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Sick of Hearing the Healthcare Lies

The on-going debate about healthcare reform hit me this week when I became quite ill. I am one of the lucky ones. I have an employer-provided healthcare plan so I was ultimately able to go to a medical facility, get diagnosed and begin treatment. My co-pay was minimal, and certainly would not have put me under water.

But what if I had not been so lucky? I use the term “lucky” quite specifically since having healthcare, at least until President Obama’s reforms, has been the luck of the draw: Did you belong to a union? Did you have an employer that provided insurance? Did you have enough money to pay for it on your own? Not to mention the actual quality of your plan, if you were, like me, lucky to have one.

Obama’s healthcare reform did not go as far as it needed to, and, with all due respect, made too many compromises with private-sector interests. In that sense, the struggle is not over for universal healthcare. President Obama, both because of his connections with corporate America and his early belief in bi-partisanship, sincerely seemed to believe that reasonable people could strike a compromise. He could not accept, and perhaps still cannot completely accept, that the Republicans —



TRANS AFRICA

Bill Fletcher Jr.

from Day One of his administration — have been out for blood.

We needed and still need full

in no position to criticize the plan since it is largely based upon the one that he initiated as governor of Massachusetts.

But the arguments of the Republicans actually are deeper and meaner than Romney’s flip-flopping. They go to the question of whether there are, or should be, a “deserving” population and an “undeserving” population. This may sound vaguely familiar, and so it should since it goes back to the Reagan era separation of the

Obama’s plan — Romney’s hypocrisy notwithstanding — becomes more understandable and equally unsettling. As far as they are concerned, let the so-called undeserving swing in the wind and look out for themselves. And if this means that this undeserving population cannot get access to quality healthcare, jobs, food housing, proper education, etc., as far as the right-wing is concerned, so be it.

Just in case you think that the right-wing is not talking about you, let me clarify who they see as the undeserving populations: the poor (the right-wing is not making the distinction anymore between a ‘good’ and ‘bad’ section); people of color; youth; immigrants of color; low-waged workers; and in many cases, anyone who makes less than \$100,000/year. Do you see yourself in that picture?

This is what the November 2012 election is all about. It is not about Obama and his record. It’s really about whether you have a right to be treated for illnesses in such a way that you are not cast into the bottomless pit of debt and poverty.

Sick or not, there is no way that I am staying home on Election Day.

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The right-wing argues that there is a segment of the population that has done little to earn any of the so-called entitlements that they receive. Therefore, these should be cut

healthcare reform. We need, in other words, the extension of Medicare to cover us all. We have to reject the false notion that this means a loss of jobs.

While I have been ill this week I have considered many of the arguments raised by the Republicans against Obama’s plan, a plan that has now been upheld by the Supreme Court as constitutional. The most ironic of the arguments comes from Mitt Romney, who is

poor into the “deserving” and the “undeserving.” In both cases, a right-wing moral judgment has been cast against a segment of the population. In today’s situation, the notion is simple: the right-wing argues that there is a segment of the population that has done little to earn any of the so-called entitlements that they receive. Therefore, these should be cut.

Flowing from this fuzzy line of thinking, Republican opposition to

Blame Republicans for High Unemployment

The unemployment rate has hovered above 8 percent for several months, most recently holding ground at 8.2 percent, the same as last month. Meanwhile, the African American unemployment rate went up, officially to 14.4 percent, and we all know that means the real rate is even higher, probably in excess of 25 percent.

Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney interrupted his vacation to gloat about the number of Americans who are experiencing misery, and his gloating might be at least somewhat amusing were this not the same man who says he likes to fire people.

The 8.2 percent unemployment is not in President Obama’s best interest. Many who are feeling the misery and pain are open to an alternative, even if it is one as muddled and confused as Romney who doesn’t support health care reform now, although he engineered a similar plan as governor of Massachusetts. This man has so talked out of his mouth, that a simple reel of his contradictory quotes would make it clear how confused, or deliberately deceiving he is.

The good news for President Obama is that the lower the unemployment rate goes, the better his chances for re-election. The better news for President Obama is that many people don’t snap into campaign mode until after Labor Day. People want jobs, to be sure, but the summer numbers even if they are level, don’t alarm everyone. The employment reports that our president has to pay the most attention to are those released the first Friday of September and



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October. This is when Republicans will get all cranked up and suggest that President Obama can’t handle the fractured economy he inherited.

Can the unemployment rate drop? Well if Republicans would

turned the money down in the interest of fiscal conservatism. There the Republicans go again, hurting their constituents to thwart President Obama.

Part of the reason Republicans can get away with this is because no one is pressuring them. Just like the Tea Party has pushed these people to the right, somebody needs to push them back to center. The Tea Party has virtually obliterated the notion of a moderate Republican, but there must be some out there, and what has to happen is that somebody needs to push back.

plan, somebody needs to remind him of the American Jobs Act. Whenever Romney starts babbling about health care, someone ought to throw Massachusetts in his face. And when the braying bunch of bobbleheads who call themselves the Tea Party get worked up over the economy, we need to ask them: How many people in your family are unemployed? How much Social Security does your mama have? Don’t your kids have student loans? Does everyone in your family have health care?

Fuelled by race matters and rhetoric, working class White people are organized for Romney, someone who would cut education, health care, and Social Security and put those “savings” into military spending and tax cuts for the wealthy. In other words, and not for the first time, working class White people are working against their own economic interests.

Meanwhile, if House Republicans want to move an economic agenda that helps some 14 million unemployed people, perhaps they can see their way clear to pass the American Jobs Act. We don’t need all the Republicans, maybe just a third of them, and I’ll wager that perhaps that many have sense enough to see what their leader, John Boehner (R-Ohio), does not. In any case, let’s make it plain. The unemployment rate is stagnant because Republicans have failed to act.

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pass the American Jobs Act, an actual plan for employment, it might. It is in the interest of the nation’s unemployed, but not in the interest of Republican chicanery, for the American Jobs Act to be enacted. In some ways, Republicans are starving their constituents to thwart President Obama. Similarly, when state and local governments have to lay people off because their budgets are tight, the federal government has previously stepped in to help. Part of the recovery funds went to state and local governments, some who

The African American community has to push, too. While few of us are Republicans, many of us live in districts with Republican representation. These representatives need to hear from us, and from our neighbors, not only African Americans. And these representatives need to hear from our mayors, not only Democrats, who can pressure them to do the right thing by cities.

Meanwhile, Republicans fiddle while Rome burns because no one has called them on it. Whenever Romney says the president has no