

Conservatives, find your roots

MYLES TEASLEY
Guest Contributor

Is it just me, or is the Republican Party of 2010 not your daddy's Republican Party? In theory, I feel as though everyone knows general Republican principles: Smaller government, traditional values, family values, strong on national security, etc. These were the values of "Compassionate Conservatism"; of Eisenhower's "Dynamic Conservatism", of Nixon and Bush Senior who used conservative values and market-based measures to correct Capitalism's social imbalances and economic inequalities? These values stated that providing for the "general welfare" neither equates to socialism nor is incompatible with the Republican Party. What has happened? What has happened to practical policy-making?

Now, we have a Republican Party where the brightest idea from what Time Magazine called one of the top 10 most influential US Conservatives is the "Roadmap for America's Future" by Wisconsin Congressman Paul Ryan. If you read the plan, I'm sure disgust will ensue. This Roadmap would have abolished S-CHIP (State Children's Health Insurance Program), thus depriving well over 7 million children of health insurance, and abolishing Medicaid thus depriving hundreds of millions of low-income Americans access to healthcare, and would replace Medicare with a government voucher system that does not adjust for inflation or rising premium costs thus phasing millions of seniors out of their own health insurance programs. The plan, in effect, would either price millions of Americans out of insurance entirely, or force millions of middle-class Americans to pay higher costs for diminishing coverage in an unreformed insurance market which would continue to discriminate coverage on the basis of age, gender and pre-existing conditions.

This "Roadmap" calls for the privatization of Social Security, A.K.A. the sale of American social security funds to private entities and stock (and we now know we

obviously can not trust our future and livelihood to the vague uncertainties of a stock market which lost well over 50% of its value from 2007-2009). Lastly, this "Roadmap" calls for the imposition of an 8.5% VAT Consumption tax on goods and services (AKA that which the middle-class spends the most money on for necessities), while simultaneously cutting the Income Tax on the wealthiest 1% of Americans IN HALF and the wealthiest 1/10th of 1% by over 60% according to the Tax Policy Center (TPC). The result of all this? The TPC estimates a \$4 trillion loss of revenue over the next decade coupled with a roughly \$1.3 trillion Federal Deficit.

To me, this seems like the same fiscal irresponsibility as Obamanomics, combined with an extreme lack of the US Constitution's "common welfare" provided for. This roadmap doesn't even contain the fact that this current Right-Wing hijacked incarnation of the GOP will destroy the public school system by ensuring the tax-base for public education flees the system due to "school choice". It doesn't consider the oxymoron of tackling terrorism while sending billions to the oil-producing Middle Eastern countries that tend to fund, directly or indirectly, the very terrorist networks we seek to dismantle.

So this is a plea to those of us who are Conservative, yet recognize the futility of these "conservative bright stars", and those of us who are reliably Republican and simply vote (just like so many liberals) on the basis of party designation. I beg you to look, not only at the promises of your own representatives, but also at the GOP as a whole. What they promise is simply a Neoconservative, big-spending, military-industrial complex perpetuating morass of extreme deregulation and corporate monopolization as opposed to the market-based competition, incentive based capitalism and Compassionate Conservatism that we should all remember.

Myles Teasley '14 is undeclared from Inglewood, CA. Contact him at myteasley@davidson.edu.

Silly feminists, rights are for men!

JESSICA C. MALORDY AND CAITLIN MCCARTNEY
Guest Contributors

We are feminists. Feminism, to us, and to millions of other men and women, is a movement and a way of thinking that promotes social, economic and political equality among women and men. Who else are feminists? The woman who believes her birth control should be covered by the same health insurance that provides her husband with Viagra. The man who wants access to paternity leave so he can bond with his newborn child. The teenage girl who wishes she could walk home alone at night without feeling afraid. How about you?

In last week's Perspectives piece "Eradicating feminism in society," Katherine Burd posits that women and men now exist on a level playing field. This assumption may seem like cold, hard fact to a student privileged enough to attend a school like Davidson, where women are given the opportunity to speak up in the classroom and participate in the community. For many women, however—including Davidson women—our ongoing inequality in various arenas is omnipresent every day of our lives. A few real, cold, hard facts: American women today make 77 cents to every white man's dollar; black women make only 62 cents, and Hispanic/Latina women make a mere 53 cents. These statistics pertain to full-time, year-round workers, not women reentering the workforce after maternity leave. These women are responsible for doing the same jobs for the same amount of time as their male colleagues.

A few more facts: all else constant, a 22-year-old woman can be charged up to one and a half times the health insurance premium of a 22-year-old man. Only fourteen states require insurance companies to offer comprehensive maternity care, yet twenty-eight states require insurance companies to offer prostate cancer screenings. It is still legal in eight states and the District of Columbia for insurance companies to refuse to insure survivors of domestic violence, which is considered a "pre-existing condition."

Despite evidence to the contrary, Burd suggests that we now live in a post-feminist age; paradoxically, she also subscribes to an essentialist mode of thinking and asserts that women possess inherent characteristics that segregate them from men. She believes women "relish the ability to stir emotion in another person" and possess "sexual power [...] over men." She does not, however, provide evidence to back up these generalizations. Her simultaneous claims that men and women are equal, yet women are capable of beguiling men, are contradictory. Burd suggests that

women's actions dictate men's perceptions of women. She argues that women, then, cannot complain about inequality when they themselves are responsible for emphasizing their sexual differences.

We disagree. Women do not control men. And while we are indeed able to control our own behavior, we cannot—nor can we expect to—control the behavior of men. Not through our sexuality, not through the way we dress, and certainly not through sitting back and hoping they will help us with our carry-on luggage. (Yes, we noticed the ableist metaphor in which Burd equated disability with supposed feminist bitterness. No, we do not have the space to delve into that issue here, but check out the most recent issue of the Davidson Journal.) To argue that either sex possesses inherent power over the other is to deny human autonomy. It is to suggest that men are incapable of being held responsible for their own actions and that women's sexuality is a force that they must learn to inhibit.

Is feminism obsolete? Have we reached the point at which our culture truly values and respects women as independent human beings who are equal to men? If so, are we supposed to simply accept that 1 in 5 female high school students report having been physically or sexually abused by a partner? That 1 in 4 college women will experience a rape or attempted rape before they graduate—including here on Davidson's campus? That more than 3 women are murdered by their partners or spouses every day? While Burd does not address violence against women, the aforementioned data exemplifies the way in which perceptions within our culture regarding women and their bodies—perceptions that Burd appears to share—result in tragedy for millions of men, women and children.

Feminism is a deeply personal movement, for us as well as many other women and men within the Davidson community. While we do not wish to alienate you, Katherine—neither of us self-identified as "feminists" upon entering Davidson in the fall of 2007—we hope that you will consider our article, and continue to explore feminism. While we would never wish upon you any of the adversity that we have personally faced and have seen our friends face, simply because we are women, we do hope that you will keep an open mind both in the classroom and in your own day-to-day life regarding the experiences of women, and the relationship of feminism to these experiences.

Jessica '11 is an English major from Lynbrook, NY, and Caitlin '11 is an English major from Greer, SC. Contact them at jemalordy@davidson.edu and camccartney@davidson.edu, respectively.

In defense of partisanship

SPENCER COWAN
Perspectives Editor

Scott Matthews laments the partisanship of our nation's politics in his column last week and asks his readers, despairingly, "don't we all agree on the fundamental issues?" According to Scott, we do not, and this, he believes, is a shame. I respectfully disagree with Scott, who seems to underestimate the essential role political partisanship plays in our democracy.

Eliminating bitter partisanship would seem to be wonderful. You could turn on CNN and watch Pat Buchanan and James Carville exchange pleasantries, not venom. And, as Scott suggests, a gridlock-free government could "change failed past policies" without cloture votes, wasteful earmarks, or even debate.

Scott is not alone in desiring to move beyond partisan politics. Then-Senate candidate Barack Obama famously declared in his keynote address to the 2004 Democratic National Convention, "this is not a liberal America and a conservative America, this is a United States of America." Yet Obama must surely have known, having lived in both Kansas and Hyde Park, that this is simply not the case. The political divisions in the United States are strong, and contrary to what Scott and Obama think, important.

"Partisanship is valuable to a democracy - vibrant partisanship prevents one majority from exercising control that silences all forms of dissent"

James Madison, author of Federalist Number 10, acknowledged that, at times, "the public good is disregarded in the conflicts of rival parties." But Madison did not seek an end to partisan politics. For one thing, Madison recognized that the causes of partisanship, or faction, as he called it, are "sown in the nature of man." Eliminating partisanship would require either complete uniformity in thought and opinion or the restriction of liberty. The former is not practical; the latter is not desirable. Unlike other attributes that seem fundamental to man, like slothfulness or bodily desire, partisanship is valuable to a democracy—vibrant partisanship prevents one majority from exercising control that silences all forms of dissent. Just as the system of checks and balances prevents one branch of government from wielding too much clout, fierce partisanship keeps one party from ever becoming too powerful. In the absence of partisanship, a democracy can devolve into a kind of tyranny. Scott seems to allude to this danger, asking why potential moderate leaders cannot "realize how much power one could seize by dominating the moderate vote."

Both the Republican and Democratic parties, as Scott notes, have their flaws—a combination of two flawed parties does not magically create a perfect party. Moderates, just like conservatives and liberals, are prone to error. Insofar as man's reason is fallible, which politicians like Christine O'Donnell or fellow Delawarean Joseph Biden confirm, warring political parties must counteract each other. No one party—not even a moderate supermajority—has all of the right answers.

The heavily publicized primary victories of Republicans like Rand Paul and Christine O'Donnell may give the impression there are no moderate Republicans running for office. Yet, in Scott's own state of Connecticut, Linda McMahon proves that impression to be false. McMahon is essentially pro-choice, and she is in favor of repealing "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." At the same time, she supports a hiring freeze on federal workers and a renewal of the Bush tax cuts. Meg Whitman, the gubernatorial candidate in California, and Mark Kirk, who is vying for Obama's old Senate seat, are just two more examples of moderate Republicans seeking office this fall.

A Republican-controlled House and Senate, in tandem with a Democratic White House, would resemble the divided government that followed the 1994 midterm elections. Working with an opposition party, then-President Bill Clinton signed a welfare reform bill in August 1996 and won his reelection bid three months later. Those who truly desire moderation—and even a second term for Barack Obama—could vote for candidates like McMahon.

Spencer Cowan '11 is a Political Science major from Cincinnati, OH, and Perspectives Section Editor. Contact him at spcowan@davidson.edu.