



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on July 18, 2012

## Where Obama is Right about Unearned Success

When Barack Obama [said](#) in Roanoke, Virginia, recently that “if you’ve been successful, you didn’t get there on your own,” he wasn’t all wrong. In fact, he knows well someone whose life thus attests. This person is a man of mixed race who billed himself as black. Growing up in a very liberal state, he was surrounded by guilt-ridden white liberals who told him his flatulence smelled like roses. He benefited from scholarships granted on the basis of race and other types of affirmative action, and was elevated beyond his capacities despite being a marijuana-addled, mediocre student. He wrote a few things (poorly), but “his” magnum opus was [penned by a talented terrorist friend](#) whom, he has said, he barely knew. He then vied for public office, and won a state seat by running unopposed. But the best legs-up were yet to come. When he decided to run for the U.S. Senate, he had a prostrate media in his corner. And when he ran for the presidency, they cranked it up into high gear, making this nobody a household name and his nefarious past disappear.



But there’s a kicker here, too: Obama didn’t even get his you-didn’t-get-there-on-your-own speech on his own. It’s essentially the same speech that Elizabeth “Fauxcahontas” Warren gave in September 2011 when she [said](#), “There is nobody in this country who got rich on his own — nobody.”

Warren also said, “You moved your goods to market on the roads *the rest of us* paid for.”

Obama said, “Somebody invested in roads and bridges.”

Warren said, “You were safe in your factory because of police-forces and fire-forces that the rest of us paid for.”

Obama said, “There are some things, just like fighting fires, we don’t do on our own.”

And something else we don’t do on our own is burn down the economy. It takes millions of enablers who hear Obama say, “Somebody helped to create this unbelievable American system that we have that allowed you to thrive” and don’t realize that the thing about that system allowing us to thrive is economic freedom. That system rewards individual initiative; that system doesn’t use a class-warfare pretext to justify reducing incentive. And “that” system is quickly ceasing to be “this” system because of redistributionist tendencies.



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Now, since Obama saw fit to parrot Warren, to further refute his thesis I'll parrot myself. As I [wrote](#) in a 2011 piece on Warren (I've replaced her name with Obama's):

When you say "the rest of us paid for," it implies that there are two opposing groups. The first is those who foot the bill; this is the proverbial "us," membership in which is apparently denied to those above a certain income threshold. And when you are above it, you're in the second group — the "them" — which, Obama's commentary implies, comprises the subsidized.

Of course, this is utter nonsense. A rich person not only pays taxes like us, he pays through the nose. He, President Obama, pays more — far more — for the roads, education, police and fire forces than you do. In fact, while approximately 50 percent of lower-income Americans now pay no federal income tax, those earning more than one million dollars a year — only 0.2 percent of the population, mind you — shoulder 21 percent of the tax burden.

As for moving goods, by the way, a company pays thousands of dollars a year in fees and taxes for each commercial truck it fields. In fact, [writes](#) Dr. John C. Taylor, "Trucking firms contribute \$12.1 billion of the total dollars going into the federal Highway Trust Fund, or about 30.6 percent of the total \$39.5 billion."

So the reality is that not only are the rich us, they're the "usiest" part of us. And if there is a "them," it's the people in government who suck off the public teat.

I should add that a poor person also benefits from infrastructure — when he drives on roads or uses products shipped on them, for instance — despite paying precious little for it.

Of course, passion for a cause, such as concern for the poor, can blind one to truths that don't seem to advance it. But, then again, is such concern what really drives the Left?

When pondering this, I think of an old leftist I knew casually when I was 19 or 20 years old. A man in his mid to late fifties, he looked perpetually tired — of life. He wasn't exactly a grouch, but his mood always seemed as drab as a public-housing project. And with a head of hair gray enough to match his mood, he looked much like Vermont's socialist Senator Bernie Sanders. In fact, I'll call him Bernie.

Now, I don't know how the subject arose, but one day Bernie started telling me about a documentary he saw. Said he, "You know, there were these two rams locking horns, and one won the contest. But he didn't really win; if you looked closely, you could see that the other ram just slipped on a stone."

The message of cynicism about competition was clear. But also obvious to me was that Bernie's attitude toward it was just a way of dealing with what he perceived as his failures in this world. "No one's really better than me. I just slipped on the stones of life!"

Ah, it's sometimes hard to tolerate people being better than us, isn't it, [Mr. Mandelbaum](#)? Bernie sure didn't seem to like it. After all, when I defended free enterprise and pointed out to him that he was sure doing well under our system as evidenced by the vehicle he drove, he replied, "It's not as nice as yours, though." Now, this wasn't really true. To the best of my recollection, he had a low-mileage SUV while I'd bought a hand-me-down Nissan Pulsar with 107,000 miles on it; only, as young guys are apt to do, I polished it up to look like a nice American car and not a communist drabmobile. But the point is this: Why was Bernie so focused on my supposedly having better wheels than he did? Because, as Winston Churchill said, socialism is the "gospel of envy."

Leftists are consumed with envy — and money. As Peter Schweizer [wrote](#) when reporting on a study:

Setting up a computer game that allowed people to accumulate money, they [researchers] gave



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participants the option to spend some of their own money in order to take away more from someone else.

The result? Those who considered themselves “egalitarians” (i.e. Left of centre) were much more willing to give up some of their own money if it meant taking more money from someone else.

So is it really concern for the poor that drives leftists’ redistributionist tendencies?

The truth is that, among other things, leftists have big egos and cannot stand others being “better” than they are. This is one reason why so many leftists are like Friedrich Nietzsche, who expressed through his version of Zarathustra in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, “If there were gods, how could I stand not to be a god! Therefore there are no gods.” And, when you don’t believe in anything beyond this world, it breeds a shallowness wherein the things of this world, such as money and possessions, are all you have in life and thus take on utmost importance. Then you say, “If there are the rich, how will I stand not to be rich! Therefore, there must be no rich.”

By the way, the very next Nietzsche line after the one above is, “Zarathustra teaches his disciples again about the power of envy.” But we already know. It is the power to destroy.



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