

## Obama's "social Darwinism" Nonsense

*Matt Welch* | April 5, 2012

The president of the United States this week gave a [remarkable speech](#), in which he said, among other silly things, this:

This congressional Republican budget is something different altogether. It is a Trojan Horse. Disguised as deficit reduction plans, it is really an attempt to impose a radical vision on our country. It is thinly veiled social Darwinism. It is antithetical to our entire history as a land of opportunity and upward mobility for everybody who's willing to work for it; a place where prosperity doesn't trickle down from the top, but grows outward from the heart of the middle class. And by gutting the very things we need to grow an economy that's built to last -- education and training, research and development, our infrastructure -- it is a prescription for decline.

Yes, he is talking about a budget that [increases spending by \\$1.4 trillion](#) over the next decade, and doesn't come anywhere near balancing the budget for as far as the eye can see.

Anyway, about that "social Darwinism" crack, Cato's David Boaz has [more](#):

The arbiters of appropriate expression in America get very exercised when conservatives call Barack Obama a "socialist." They [treat the claim](#) in the same way as calling Obama a Muslim, Kenyan, or "the anti-Christ."

But headlines this week report that President Obama accused the Republicans of "social Darwinism," and I don't see anyone exercised about that. A *New York Times* [editorial](#) endorses the attack.

Is "social Darwinist" within some bound of propriety that "socialist" violates? I don't think so. [...]

[N]o one calls himself a social Darwinist. Not now, not ever. [Not Herbert Spencer](#). The term is always used to label one's opponents. In that sense it's clearly a more abusive term than "socialist," a term that millions of people have proudly claimed. [...]

It's always used as a smear of conservatives and libertarians — by the historian [Richard Hofstadter](#), by the [fabulist Robert Reich](#), and now even by the president of the United States.

Read *Reason* Senior Editor Damon Root's classic text on the old smear: "[The Unfortunate Case of Herbert Spencer](#): How a libertarian individualist was recast as a social Darwinist."