Roughly 77 years ago, a move was made to help all Americans -- help especially to those who were older, unlucky, unfortunate, and underage, find a little optimism in their thin soup.

August 14, 1935: President Franklin Roosevelt signed Social Security into law. It has become one of the country's most successful insurance and retirement programs.

No matter what Republicans might say, these are not entitlements because people have *paid premiums* into the system, just as they would *any other* insurance or retirement program.

Entitlements are more accurately defined as the unquestioned belief of elite One Percenters that only *they* should benefit from this country's vast wealth, the rock-solid presumption and world view only *they* deserve to do so.

Another example of the difference? One *great expectation is that the Romneys assume it is "their turn" to be President. After all, the stars -- and most importantly, the mega-money, super-PAC streams -- are all lined up, pointing one way.*

The Romneys no doubt believe they can see, from the back porches and servants' entrances at all their mansions, not Russia, but both the Red "Magic" Carpet Ride and the Inherited Bootstrap Success Express constellations. Yes: Those skyward star clusters are rounding the celestial corner and coming into clear view, just for them, these many starry-eyed children of formerly bright -- and now dead -- stars, whose lives have been anything but star-crossed.

And, of Social Security: The insurance and retirement program has helped millions of seniors and others stay off poverty rolls and provide a baseline of sustenance and subsistence without penalty for age, afflictions, or challenges. The program has helped people with disabilities, widows, and widowers live lives approaching some basic level of dignity and security. Social Security even helps children who have had one or both parents die.

Of this last point, it is why it is so difficult to understand why Willard Romney's running mate, Paul Ryan, has called Social Security a "Ponzi scheme" and is so strong a proponent of gutting and privatizing both Social Security and Medicare -- wildly successful programs serving millions of Americans, and doing so with low overhead and operating costs.

After all, Paul Ryan was himself a beneficiary of Social Security checks, just like his espoused lifelong hero, Ayn Rand, who herself received both Social Security checks and Medicare help, all while railing against the evils and dangers of government -- thereby providing the ideal role model for all Teabaggers to emulate.

[[Sidebar for a theatrically-posed, sudden gasp of realization: Oh, right: Low operating costs -- that is precisely why Republicans have and make so many objections! Such modest operating costs exist precisely because there is no profit motive perpetually bleeding the system from within, on all sides and angles, simply to provide executives with private airfields and jets, multiple overseas vacation homes, and year-end, stock-option-and-bonus plans exceeding the GDP of some countries.

Plus, those shouts of privitization provide additional opportunities for hypocrisy, something no self-righteous, supposedly hyper-religious rightwingnut could ever hope to pass up!]]

Meanwhile, Social Security percolates along just fine with its $2.7 trillion surplus, able to right now pay 100% of the benefits of all the owed policy pay-outs for the next 21 years -- something few financial institutions and insurance companies could ever say without federal backing, not the way they take gambles with their own casinos.

Such ongoing, solid success for the American people greatly annoys always-restless capitalists itching to get their hands on that fat Social Security pot -- one of the Last Great Concentrations of Money in the land that bankers and financiers have been forced to leave unraided.

This is why the push to privatize Social Security and Medicare is so feverish and hurried. There are attempts to storm the back-door defenses of the American people and their insurance and retirement program via changes in the way the Consumer Price Index is calculated, and

then chained to Social Security. Doing so sneakily and surreptitiously slashes Social Security payments to people, legally manipulating ways in which severely negative effects are not immediately apparent.

There are frontal assaults, too: Billionaire Pete Peterson has pledged a thousand-million dollars of his own tycoon-ish fortune to chisel down Social Security and other programs on which millions of people depend. Others on Wall Street have taken the same grubbing oath to also get their hands on that pile of money by weakening and destroying Social Security.

Of course, the current crisis is one manufactured and hatched by Republicans long ago: Overspend on war, cut taxes for the rich, and -- as they say -- starve the government beast, make it small enough to drown in the bathtub. This creates a natural opening for rightwingers to plead poverty, and slash domestic programs beyond bareness of bone, down to marrow.

It's cunning, in its vile way, like setting fires coast to coast, then, when the blaze gets hellishly rolling, remind the little people that only the rich have paid for fire protection -- but that all the people
might
be included, if they will simply give up
everything
of any value in their lives.
Of course, they can always choose to burn...

Instead, we should strengthen Social Security, immediately lifting the tax cap that excludes income over $106,800 -- over this amount, no tax has ever been required. For the wealthy, it's always been a free ride, scot-free,
sky's the limit!

The Center for Economic Policy and Research has estimated applying the payroll tax on annual incomes more than twice that, those over $250,000 -- a quarter of a million dollars -- would affect only the wealthiest 1-point-4 percent of wage earners.

So far, the American people are the star-crossed -- and very nearly the double-crossed -- here, at the hands of the wealthy and powerful, the starry-eyed, always wanting to accumulate more

and more.

Somehow, regular people have to find a way to break through all those golden earplugs: so far, when we say, "Please pay your fair share," all they hear is "Eat the rich!"

Yet, for decades, when they speak, all that ever comes out is "Screw you, I've got mine." Nothing else. Just this latest version of "Let them eat cake."