

Libertine or Liberator? Take the Social Litmus Test

Posted by

Friday, 21 July 2006 09:25 - Last Updated Friday, 21 July 2006 09:25

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JMC - Jack Random - If a student wishes to pray during school hours, let him or her do so without imposing his or her religious fervor and beliefs on anyone else. I would advise that student that study or social engagement would likely be more beneficial but that is an individual judgment. If a citizen wishes to express disgust for American actions and policies by burning a Chinese-made symbol of American injustice, imperialism, violence or arrogance, it is every citizen's right in a democratic nation.

www.jazzmanchronicles.blogspot.com

LIBERATION RAMBLE: SOCIAL POLICY LITMUS TEST

Jack Random

[THE JAZZMAN CHRONICLES ? DISSEMINATE FREELY.](#)

The Liberation Institute, a nonexistent organization, recently interviewed commentator Jack Random to determine the author's potential qualifications as a liberator. This is a transcript of the Domestic Policy portion of the test.

Liberation Institute: Do you support gay marriage?

Jack Random: It is difficult to divorce gay marriage from the politics of distraction. Of course, I believe that any two adults ? or indeed any configuration of adults ? should be able to enter a contractual agreement of their choosing. The idea that the marriage of two same-sex adults somehow harms the marriage of a male-female couple is absurd. However, I am not convinced that marriage is an institution that is worthy of protection. It is a contract burdened by discriminatory tradition and religious dogma. Gay couples deserve all the rights of any other couples but without the burdens that accompany an antiquated institution.

Was the issue of gay marriage worth a second term of George W. Bush?

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I generally resist boiling complex issues down to bumper sticker talking points but that is where we are. So if I have to boil it down, I would say I'm pro-gay rights and anti-marriage.

LI: Do you support the right to abortion?

JR: Yes, as a matter of principle. I believe that everyone has a right to choose anything as long as that choice does not infringe on the rights of another. No one speaks for the unborn ? certainly not the rightwing zealots who blockade health clinics, prevent funding of birth control in third world countries, and elected a war president in the name of life (with the assistance of criminal fraud).

I believe in the independence and survival of the soul as an indefensible matter of faith. It follows that a soul is better off not being born to a mother whose free choice is abortion.

LI: What is your position on embryonic stem cell research?

JR: There is a line to be drawn on the ethical use of embryos but our president has drawn a line in the air by blocking the use of embryos scheduled for discard at fertility clinics. Taken to its logical conclusion (not the president's strong point), his reasoning would place an absolute ban on the discarding of all embryos. He has not taken that position because it would immediately shut down fertility clinics, denying life to the very same toddlers he paraded on his televised veto.

Pandering to his fundamentalist base, he has effectively accused the majority of American people (including Nancy Reagan) of the moral equivalent of murder.

However sincere or insincere the president's convictions, they should not hold a trump card on the ethics of science. By this ill-conceived veto, he has handicapped the nation in an important area of research and one that promises to uphold, improve, protect and enhance human life.

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LI: Do you believe in open borders?

JR: Yes, but as long as nations exist, they have a right to know who resides within their borders and a right to deny entry with due cause. We do not have a right, however, to scapegoat an entire class of people who are playing by the overriding rules of economic policy. Mexican immigrant workers are the victims of a cynical corporate globalization strategy that hides under the banner of "free trade." The corporate powers, in collaboration with the world's most powerful nations, have deliberately created cheap labor forces while simultaneously decimating social programs to ease the suffering of the poor. Workers who cannot sustain a decent living for their families will seek to improve their lot.

The solution is not punishment or erecting a wall but raising the wages and standards of workers everywhere and strengthening the social programs that compensate misfortune.

LI: What are your views on flag burning and prayer in the schools?

JR: There is no end to the distractions Karl Rove and his ilk are willing to employ in order to retain power despite the abject failure of their tenure in office. If a student wishes to pray during school hours, let him or her do so without imposing his or her religious fervor and beliefs on anyone else. I would advise that student that study or social engagement would likely be more beneficial but that is an individual judgment.

If a citizen wishes to express disgust for American actions and policies by burning a Chinese-made symbol of American injustice, imperialism, violence or arrogance, it is every citizen's right in a democratic nation. In my judgment, it is a poor and counterproductive method of persuasion but it is a right. We have far too many people behind bars already without finding ridiculous reasons to imprison more.

LI: Should illicit drugs be legalized?

JR: Yes, legalized and controlled. It is interesting that those who promote continued criminalization of illegal drugs (often for political advantage) are often the same people who

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promote deregulation of legal drugs. If we have learned anything in recent years, we should have learned that popular pharmaceutical drugs pose a greater threat to the lives and health of their users than illicit drugs do.

Every person who takes a drug is entitled to know the risks. Is an erection-on-demand or temporary relief of acid indigestion worth the risk of stroke, heart attack or liver disease? If an individual is fully informed, he is also entitled to take that risk.

In California, there is not enough money to maintain the schools, transportation systems, emergency services and the prison system. We passed a proposition that offered treatment as an alternative to imprisonment for some illicit drug users. It has saved a great deal of money and probably the lives of many who would have been lost in prison. It is a rare case where doing the right thing is also cost effective.

People who abuse drugs have enough problems without facing imprisonment. Except for the privileged and elite, who sometimes use rehabilitation to revive their careers, drug abusers are caught in a cycle of criminal behavior that allows no escape. Legalization would cut the criminal element out of the loop and enable society to treat their afflictions with professional care, wisdom and compassion.

LI: That concludes the interview. Do you have any questions?

JR: Did I pass the test?

LI: The results will be tabulated and the findings released at an appropriate time.

JR: To what end?

LI: That information is confidential.

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JR: Jazz.

LI: Is that a code?

JR: That information is confidential.