



THE AMERICAN SPECTATOR

WINTER 2020

Edited by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.



LIBERTY IN CRISIS

Viva the Devolution! The Iconoclastic Left
Biden Time
Crumbling Institutions, Toppling Cities
China's Very Good Year

BEST OF THE WEB: A 2020 WRAP-UP
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Winter 2020

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EDITORIAL OFFICE
The American Spectator
122 S. Royal Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
703-807-2011
editor@spectator.org
www.spectator.org

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OFFICE MANAGER: Cathy Cook

WEB SERVICES: Josh Eberly

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Misty 2020 Memories

The year we'll choose to forget.

by **Melissa Mackenzie**

The year 2020 is like the mist in the Stephen King novel — insidious and dread-inducing. The protagonists can't escape. What started off as a dramatic political storm turned into something more ominous. 2020 was in the shadows, lying in wait.

Capturing this illusive and menacing character is difficult. The year started so well. In January, unemployment in the United States was at historic lows. Many Americans, especially blue-collar workers, enjoyed record pay increases. Every segment of the population benefited. Real optimism returned to all but the Resistance, who seemed intent on wrecking the country from within.

Speaking of those crazy conspiracists, the Democrats, led by Nancy Pelosi, decided that the way to fight President Donald Trump was to mire him in baseless rumors and accuse him of being a Russian asset — no, wait, a Ukrainian asset — and also an anti-Chinese racist. Early this year, at the beginning of what would turn out to be a world-wrecking pandemic, the speaker of the House and her minions impeached the president.

When Pelosi wasn't impeaching, she was preaching. She proudly pranced through Chinatown on February 24 in her home of San Francisco to prove her open-mindedness about Chinese people. On the East Coast, New York City's Democrat Mayor Bill de Blasio and his health adviser did the same in Chinatown. While they paraded packed together, COVID-19 spread. By March, the reality of the virus laid bare the hubris, especially in New York. People carrying COVID traveled back from Wuhan and unleashed it on the world — but not the rest of China.

From New York, COVID exploded across the fruited plains. Close behind the virus came tyranny. It didn't seem so at first. "Fourteen days to flatten the curve" turned into months of economic and social agony. The CDC flubbed testing, losing precious weeks. Americans dutifully obeyed conflicting instructions. It didn't matter. The contagion spread.

New York was a hellscape of sirens, packed hospitals, and palpable fear. Ventilators, a hospital ship, and temporary hospitals were rushed to the ailing city. Few of these extra



Melissa Mackenzie is publisher of *The American Spectator*.

resources were used. Instead, Gov. Andrew Cuomo sent the sickest residents into nursing homes, which spread the disease and killed the most vulnerable. It was a disaster. It's estimated that at least six thousand, probably more, people died unnecessarily. To celebrate his triumph, Gov. Cuomo wrote a book congratulating himself on his leadership. Hollywood just rewarded him with an Emmy. At this writing, New York is again in the throes of viral pain. The governor and mayor of New York City are currently arguing about how to count cases. Leadership!

It got worse. In May, as people sat at home, staring at their TVs with nothing to do, they witnessed an alleged murder at the hands of police officers in Minneapolis, Minnesota. George Floyd, suffocating on a drug overdose, appeared to be choked to death by indifferent cops. The video was gruesome. In this issue, George Parry writes about this tragedy and explains what pathologists and the media did not: the officers are innocent. This video and the media outrage reacting to the incident inflamed passions and obscured truth. The perceived injustice lit a tinderbox of violence across the nation.

Part tension release, part grief, part fury, chaos swept cities and businesses across America as they were attacked, looted, and left smoldering ruins. Public sentiment backed the "protesters" at first. As the summer dragged on and places like Seattle and Portland devolved into murder and anarchy, the protests morphed from black lives mattering to Black Lives Matter and Antifa, two communist organizations intent on "remaking" America. John Hinderaker of the website Powerline writes about the aftermath in Minneapolis. Karol Markowicz writes a lament for her beloved New York City.

Meanwhile, COVID continued. Southern cities that had been spared the worst through the summer saw post-George Floyd march infection increases. The media pointed scornfully at Republican leadership and blamed them for the deaths. Politicizing the disease became de rigueur, the apotheosis being Jane Fonda's statement calling coronavirus "God's gift to the Left."

The politicization of the virus infected the way epidemiologists talked about it, made recommendations, and interpreted data. Matthias Shapiro and Phil Kerpen write about this phenomenon. Between politicians ignoring their own edicts and scientists excusing virus-spreading behavior situationally, no one trusts these leaders. Citizens are now rejecting their capricious recommendations and acting in defiance.

In response to the COVID caterwauling, decrepit Democrat nominee Joe Biden stayed in his basement, content to let the media and tech companies run his campaign against President Donald Trump. Their relentless bias and loathing did its work. Hatred took deep root, and too many Americans, in the midst of economic pain and implacable virus terror, forgot the last three good years. Executive Editor Wlady Pleszczynski discusses the media's unfairness to the president.

Intertwined with the COVID, Floyd, and presidential election narratives, issues of race, gender, and "privilege" came to the fore.

America became a sophomore college dorm at Wellesley. No aspect of American life has been off-limits from cultural Marxism. Critical Race Theory became the new language to describe one's oppression. Wilfred Reilly digs through these pernicious ideas. Abigail Shrier writes about girls and transgenderism. Larry Thornberry discusses how leftist ideology has polluted professional sports.

No institution has been spared of cultural rot. Churches, entertainment, education, foreign policy, the bureaucracy generally — all are in decline. All are addressed in this issue.

Meanwhile, as young writer John Jiang notes, China had a great year.

2020 isn't over. The election results are still in question but will be decided by the time you, dear reader, hold this magazine. President Trump has a hope of reversing the election outcome, but only a fool's hope. His coattails delivered a poll-defying House nearly evenly divided. Nancy Pelosi describes her losses as a mandate. The Senate, dependent on Georgia's run-off election,

will likely stay in Republican hands. Should Joe Biden be declared winner by the Electoral College in December, he'll be pushed to his left by the aggressive socialist wing of the party.

No matter the outcome, the losing side will deny the results of the election. Soon after the election, over one hundred thousand people marched in D.C. to support President Trump. Half the country believes the 2020 election was stolen.

Governors and local officials continue to abuse the Constitution. The newly confirmed constitutionalist judges and justices (a triumph of Trump's presidency) will be addressing the multitude of impositions on freedoms in response to the inevitable lawsuits. Thousands protest against the new lockdowns. Governors are being confronted in restaurants. Small business owners are defying police and sanitation inspectors.

Rather than angst dissipating after the election, it's intensifying. The year 2020 will cast a foggy shadow into 2021. Democrats are uneasy. The socialist wing distrusts Biden. Moderate voters believe he's moderate. That's sure to be disappointing. One tiny, joyful Biden-voting constituency abides: Never Trump "Republicans." They view Biden's potential tenure as a return to (corrupt) norms and an end to woes. The former is true, and that's the problem. The latter is fantasy. More realistically, 2021 will usher in an America few will recognize.

To manage your pain, might I suggest grabbing an adult beverage and skipping to the end of the magazine to whip up a recipe shared with us from fellow readers? If you've turned to food and drink during these dark days, you're not alone. Our Subscriber's Poll will affirm you. Thank you to our hundreds of respondents! Thank you for your recipes, too! We hope you'll enjoy them.

May you find solace in faith and family this holiday season. My brood and I will be celebrating Thanksgiving together, grateful for our nation's many blessings — our liberty most of all. What grace to be a citizen of this American Republic. May we fight for and keep it. 🍂

Governors and local officials continue to abuse the Constitution.

The Pleasure of His Company

by Wlady Pleszczynski



In case you didn't know, life isn't fair. But just how unfair was driven home the Sunday before Thanksgiving when last season's Heisman Trophy winner and the NFL's number one draft choice, Joe Burrow, suffered a ghastly knee injury in a game against what's now officially called the Washington Football Team. (Say "Redskins" ever again and your tongue will be separated from your mouth.) His career isn't over, but it's not yet clear when or if he'll play again next season.

Shortly after Burrow's LSU team defeated Clemson for the national championship in January, the victors came to the White House. President Trump had a great time with them, and singled out Burrow as "a young Tom Brady." He praised Burrow for the serious money he's raised for the food pantry in impoverished Athens County, Ohio.

Of course, I was more impressed by the souvenir photo of Burrow and the president behind the Resolute Desk in the Oval Office. A few months earlier I had stood in the same spot as Burrow for a similar photo with Mr. Trump, and it's become one of my prized possessions. I probably should have it insured with Lloyd's, along with the Keep America Great cap I received.

Bob Tyrrell, Jeff Lord, and I met with the president for an hour or so that late afternoon — our Indiana friend Vice President Mike Pence, the most decent and likable of men, joined us toward the end of our visit. I carried away countless dizzying impressions, along with a big shopping bag of



Wlady Pleszczynski is executive editor of The American Spectator.

bling that the president loaded up for us. Yet one thing couldn't have been more crystal clear: this president is simply delightful, fascinating company. A more authentic chief executive is hard to imagine.

So why do they hate him so? Is it simply because bigotry and loathing have become second nature with so many on the other side. And it never stops. One would be tempted to tell these people to get over themselves, but if they did that what would they have left?

One thing the president makes clear is that he's more than happy not to be like them. How else to explain how he's survived four-plus years of contending with the worst lynch mob our politics has ever unleashed against any president?

The mysteries of this past election aren't likely to be resolved. Mr. Trump received a record amount of votes for an incumbent running for a second term, his party made big gains in Congress, yet he officially lost to a nonentity who didn't bother to campaign, preferring to hide out in his bunker. (Sorry, Dems, but you asked for it. Expect payback to become a pronounced feature of the next four years.) Unverifiable mail-in votes, as Mr. Trump warned, did their work, and the uncurious, useless media isn't likely to raise any questions about the matter.

One might now be tempted to call Mr. Trump a one-term wonder, someone like James Polk who accomplished great things in his short tenure (1845–49). But that would be selling the man short. Last time I checked, Pope Francis is eighty-three, an age Mr. Trump won't turn until 2029. If Mr. Trump decides to run again in 2024, he'll be just about Mr. Biden's current age, and certainly spryer. And it will be genuine payback to his perpetually disloyal opposition if he turns out to be not only the forty-fifth president of the United States but also the forty-seventh. Life will suddenly become fairer. ✎



How to Save the Democratic Party

Biden moves from his basement into battle with the progressives and socialists in his party.

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

You might recall that nine years ago I wrote a book entitled *The Death of Liberalism*. It was an answer to Sam Tanenhaus's suicidal 2009 book *The Death of Conservatism*. Sam's book came out mere months before the conservative wave election of 2010. The liberals still have not gotten over the 2010 election. It pretty much eliminated an entire tier of promising liberal candidates. It also explains why the Democrats' promising young presidential candidates this time around were the likes of Beto O'Rourke — remember him? Or Eric Swalwell — remember him? And, of course, there was Kamala Harris, who dropped out of the race before the primaries even began. Could any of these Young Turks have beaten Donald Trump in 2020? I doubt it. That is why the Democrats nominated seventy-seven-year-old Joe Biden, the guy who spent most of the campaign in his basement.

The Democrats still have failed to overcome their 2010 loss to the Republicans. The year 2010 will be looked back on as a historic year in politics.

This year the Democrats' victory had to rely on an old geezer consigned to his basement along with a sizable vote from the Never Trump crowd to win the presidency. I think the Never Trump crowd's vote was

a mistake, but we shall have to wait and see if I am right or not. Put another way, the liberals of 2010 have yet to overcome the conservatives of 2010. In fact, I as the author of *The Death of Liberalism* will go so far as to say that the 2022 election will see the conservatives flipping the House of Representatives with very few liberals in sight. The Democrats will field progressives and now socialists and perhaps even vegetarians in 2022, but hardly a liberal will be seen. As the man said, liberalism is dead.

I am amazed to see supposedly informed commentators on politics write about such people as Congressgirl Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez as liberals. Or the Democratic candidate for the Senate from Georgia, Jon Ossoff, being called a liberal. Congressgirl Ocasio-Cortez calls herself a progressive or perhaps when she is on home turf in the Bronx even a socialist. Ossoff calls himself a progressive. They are not liberals even if mainstream commentators long for the good old days of such true liberals as Hubert Humphrey and Adlai Stevenson. There are few liberals left. That explains why so many Democrats down ballot were beaten this year. It is difficult to find a liberal left in the Democratic Party.

This should not be viewed as bad news for sensible Democrats. I would think it



R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr. is founder and editor-in-chief of The American Spectator.

gives them something useful to do. Revive the term “liberal.” Take it for your own. Really, liberal is not as discredited a term as progressive or socialist or Marxist–Leninist. Point to your very own Ronald Reagan, that would be Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and say you are running in 2022 as a liberal, a Roosevelt liberal.

Moreover, you have a candidate who even knew Roosevelt — Joe Biden. Well, Joe is almost old enough to have known FDR. Joe, claim that as a little boy you met FDR while on a stamp collectors’ trip to Washington. Do not worry about details. You once claimed to be a coal miner, and besides in American schools today history is seldom taught. Few people will know. Joe, revive the term “liberal” for the Democratic Party and you will make history.

What is more, if Joe were to revive the term “liberal,” it would put him squarely in the mainstream of the Democratic Party

**Joe, revive the term
“liberal” for the
Democratic Party
and you will make
history.**

today. He would no longer have to be afraid of progressives or socialists or even Marxist–Leninists among the Democrats. He would be able to stress his Rooseveltian heritage.

Not only that, but he could avail himself of a whole series of policies that other Democrats in their recent squabbles with Donald Trump have completely forgotten.

Consider these policies. How about reverting to the “mixed economy”? Yes, I know we already have a mixed economy, but Joe, mix it up some more. There are some Never Trumpers who can help you. The very definition of a Never Trumper is that he or she is pretty mixed up to begin with. And how about advocating “moderation” in foreign policy? Joe, if you are for nothing else you are for moderation. Finally, insist on being a Big Spender. You might even convince some Republicans about the need to spend more money that we do not have.

Joe, you are the one to revive liberalism in the Democratic Party. Go to it. ✎



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POLITICS



Bill Wilson
Custody Battle, 2020 (Bill Wilson Studio)



How About a Nice Game of Election While Biden Visits the Tomb of the Unknown Voter?

Mail-in ballots made 2020 a real wild card.

by **Dov Fischer**

As of this writing — ten days after the 2020 elections — we still have no idea who won the presidential race. We still may not know by the time you read this. Indeed, historians may never know who won.

The elections were condemned to chaos from their outset, born in an Original Sin, as Democrats raced to manipulate the coronavirus pandemic to justify conducting a nationwide massive mail-in vote that would risk overwhelming any and all tabulating systems theretofore in place. We had conducted some mail balloting over the years — for the military, the ill and confined, and others who would request a mail ballot. But the plot that unfolded in early and mid-2020 to pump tens of millions of unsolicited mail ballots into the stream of voting ensured chaos.

Everything about the elections seemed wrong, as if emanating from an alternate universe. One of the two main candidates would not come out of basement hiding, rarely campaigning in public. He generated no excitement and left his advocates always gasping for breath and clawing their fingernails into any available surface, fearing what gaffe next might emanate. He had urged his voters on one occasion to vote for him on “Super Thursday,” two days after a major primary multi-state showdown. On another occasion, he begged his voters to cast their ballots for him, explaining that he needed them to secure the U.S. Senate seat he was pursuing. Famously, his gaffes came to define him.

By contrast, his opponent, the incumbent president of the United States, was as energetic as ever. The exciting Republican National Convention, marked by unprecedented Black and Hispanic engagement, had overwhelmed the dull and stodgy Democrat version where each night another host demonstrated the perils of using Zoom for inspiration. While the Democrat week ended with a low-budget display of a few fireworks in a parking lot that evoked an evening at Sonic for a burger and fries, the GOP convention concluded with a star-spangled fireworks display that seemed akin to what Francis Scott Key had witnessed in Baltimore during the War of 1812 on the night he wrote the lyrics that became our national anthem.

The president got waylaid briefly when infected with COVID-19 but soon was back on the campaign trail, more robust than ever. While the Left Media had sought to leverage a rally in Tulsa, half a year earlier, to suggest that the president had lost his ability to draw large crowds, the reality manifested day after day in October and November as huge



Rabbi Dov Fischer is Rabbi of Young Israel of Orange County, a Senior Rabbinic Fellow and West Coast Vice President of Coalition for Jewish Values, and an adjunct professor of law at two major Southern California law schools. He is the author of two books.



assemblages in the tens of thousands thronged, buoyed by an energized Donald Trump. One might be excused for thinking that maybe, instead of starting each morning with a caffeine pick-me-up from a cup of Joe, perhaps it is better to begin daily with a cocktail of Dexamethasone, Zinc, Vitamin D, and whatever else the doctors had given President Trump during his COVID recovery. Inspired by thoughts paralleling Estelle Reiner’s cameo restaurant character in the famous scene in *When Harry Met Sally*, who could blame anyone watching Donald Trump on the campaign trail for saying “I’ll have what he’s having”?

The professionals’ polls, though, kept telling Americans not to believe what they were seeing. As late as Election Eve, pollsters assured us that we were on the verge of a Biden blowout. Reuters had Biden winning the national vote by 7 points; Quinnipiac gave it to Biden by double digits at 11 and CNBC by 10. Biden would win Pennsylvania by 7 points (ABC News and also Monmouth), 6 points (Reuters and also the *New York Times*), or 5 points (NBC News/Marist). He would win Florida by 6 (Emerson), by 5 (Quinnipiac), or 4 (Reuters/Ipsos). Biden would take North Carolina by 2 (CNBC), Michigan by 7 points (also CNBC), and Wisconsin by 8 (CNBC again). The *New York Times* gave Biden Wisconsin by 11, while Reuters had him winning by 10. Quinnipiac had Biden taking Ohio by 4. Reuters had Biden winning Michigan by 10, with Emerson putting it at 7. In the end, all those states either were won outright by the president or mostly remained one-point squeakers.

The crack polling boded a Senate bloodbath as well for Republicans. Reuters and CNBC led other pollsters — all thirteen major polls, except for Trafalgar — who gave North Carolina’s alliterative showdown to Cal Cunningham over Thom Tillis. Emerson had Theresa Greenfield unseating Joni Ernst in Iowa by 4. Only days before voting, Greenfield’s smashing win likewise was predicted by CBS News, Monmouth, InsiderAdvantage, Quinnipiac, and the *New York Times*.

Emerson had Sara Gideon beating Susan Collins by 6 in Maine. To their everlasting credit, though, most polls correctly predicted that the Democrats would win the Senate seat in Massachusetts, and the Republicans would hold the State House in Utah. In the end, Republican Joni Ernst won Iowa handily by 7, while Susan Collins won Maine by 9. Other races where polls saw incumbent Republican U.S. senators facing disaster and catastrophe ended with Lindsay Graham winning a laughter by 10 points in South Carolina, as did John Cornyn in Texas (also by 10), Steve Daines in Montana (likewise 10 points), and Mitch McConnell in Kentucky (by 20).

In the end, the Republicans secured at least fifty Senate seats and remained well positioned to nail down their majority when Georgia will vote in two runoff contests on January 5 pitting two established and experienced Republican U.S. senators, David Perdue and Kelly Loeffler, against a radical socialist thirty-three-year-old fellow who has refined losing to an art form and an even more radical candidate whose claims to fame include praising the Rev. Jeremiah Wright’s “G-d-damn America” sermon and comparing Israel to Apartheid South Africa. Those latter two, Democrats Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock, seem destined for the Stacey Abrams Museum of the Georgia Wannabe Who Never Wuz.

And so it went down-ticket. Pollsters spoke of Democrats adding five to ten seats or more to their majority. Instead, as of this writing, Republicans have flipped at least eleven Democrat House seats, with several more flips only days away from confirmation, and Jeff Van Drew, who switched parties during the Pelosi–Schiff impeachment fiasco, held his once-Democrat seat firmly, but this time for the Republican column. As a result, the Democrat House majority now is shaved down from 235 to 199 to a tight advantage of barely some ten. All it will take is a flip of half a dozen more seats in 2022, and Nancy Pelosi will be able to spend more time having her hair blown without masking and eating \$13 quarts of ice cream.

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Of course the race to watch remains the presidential nail-biter. On Election Night President Trump led comfortably in the major battlegrounds. Suddenly, like a choreographed dance number, virtually all such states stopped counting. Soon, vote dumps swirled for Biden. In time, though Dead Men Tell No Tales, many of the once-living took a moment's pause from the crypt to cast ballots for Uncle Joe. A voting-equipment company, Dominion Voting Systems, suddenly came under new scrutiny. Although they had donated to the Clinton Foundation and their machinery had been rejected for use in Texas, their software and hardware were dominant in North Carolina, Nevada, Georgia, Michigan, Arizona, and Pennsylvania — comprising eighty-four electoral college votes in six of the tightest battleground states. Voters still remember from last year's Democrat Iowa state caucuses the extent of chaotic electoral damage that defective tabulating software can wreak. Pennsylvania Democrat election officials meanwhile tried to count mail ballots arriving after the formally legislated state deadline, even late ballots bereft of postmarks, until Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito ordered them to segregate those envelopes. Wisconsin recorded an unheard-of near-90 percent turnout of registered voters, with Milwaukee tallying an 84 percent turnout — just enough to tilt the state results last-minute for Biden by less than 1 percent — even though Cleveland, a nearby Midwestern metropolis with a similar demographic, tallied only a 51 percent voter turnout in a state with a Trump lead too wide to trample. Georgia, meanwhile, found itself engaged in a manual audit, recounting every ballot.

Racing to document voter fraud and election shenanigans with admissible evidence to gain judicial scrutiny, Republicans proceeded to obtain in a single week at least 234 sworn affidavits signed by witnesses to alleged fraud. When the *Washington Post* published a story that one key witness, a Pennsylvania postal worker, had

recanted his assertions of election fraud in the Keystone State, that gentleman, Richard Hopkins, went on Twitter to deny instead the *WaPo* wistful account and to reassert the cheating he had seen. Other Republicans were denied the opportunity even to behold the cheating as state election officials in Democrat battlegrounds barred them from viewing the actual tabulating, instead relegating them to the cheap seats far away. And they did not even offer them binoculars. Although CBS, NBC, ABC, PBS, CNN, and MSNBC insisted on crowning Joe Biden as their new leader, and even Fox News started calling him “president-elect,” the incumbent in the White House, true to the form he brought four years earlier as an outsider entering the Swamp, once again would not be intimidated and determinedly insisted — uncharacteristically for a Republican — on asserting his constitutional right to have the facts investigated and the courts adjudicate the mess. Certainly Al Gore had fought for more than a month, all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, over chads in Florida. By contrast, cheated Republicans always had faded away meekly after being pick-pocketed: Richard Nixon in 1960, Sen. Norm Coleman in 2008 Minnesota, Sen. Ted Stevens in 2008 Alaska, Gov. Dino Rossi in 2004 Washington state, and so many others cheated out of their seats over the years.

Perhaps as you read this, you now know how the saga ends. More probably, unless five Supreme Court justices will have shown courage in facing down the Clinton–Obama picks named Breyer, Sotomayor, and Kagan, it will remain a mystery that never will be resolved nor deciphered. Our best detectives are gone. Sherlock Holmes is ineligible because of White Male Privilege. Agatha Christie, albeit a woman, is deceased and therefore can offer little but another Democrat vote from beyond the grave. And Charlie Chan seem destined for assignment by Ocasio-Cortez and Robert Reich to mandatory reeducation in Critical Race Theory. Meanwhile, as of this writing, Donald Trump is president. ✎



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CULTURAL DECLINE



The Spiritual Mob

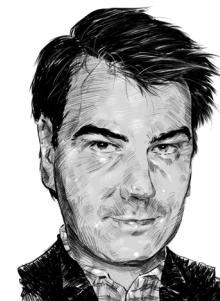
Anacharsis Cloots, Alexandre Lenoir, and the long war for civilization.

by Matthew Omolesky

Not far from Germany's border with the Netherlands, nestled between the meandering Lower Rhine Valley and the sodden marshland engirdling the city of Kleve, lies an avenue of stately chestnut trees straight out of a Barbizon School landscape, a thoroughfare that stretches for a shaded, exquisitely melancholy quarter-mile through flatlands and fen-sucked fogs before ending at the forbidding wrought-iron gates of Schloss Gnadenthal. One might expect that this hidden Schloss, erected in 1704 atop the ruins of an Augustinian monastery destroyed during the Eighty Years' War, would resemble one of those romantic Rhineland citadels so memorably described in Longfellow's *Hyperion* — “ancient castles, grim and hoar, that had taken root as it were on the cliffs” — but this proves not to be the case. Instead Gnadenthal soon reveals itself as a consummate example of a *Lustschloss* or *maison de plaisance*, a charming Baroque country retreat for the German landed gentry, replete with landscape gardens, pavilions, mirror lakes, and a magnificent two-story brick orangery. When Talleyrand pined for the “sweetness of life” that pervaded the eighteenth century before the French Revolution, that era which “shaped all the conquering arms against this elusive adversary called boredom,” he might well have been describing life at Schloss Gnadenthal under the ancien régime.

These days the venerable manor house serves as a utilitarian, mostly characterless conference and seminar hotel, described by various online reviewers as “more like a retirement home” and “no better than a 70s dorm room,” which is hardly surprising given that the structure, damaged by artillery fire during the Second World War, was repurposed first to house senior citizens and then as a detachment of United States Air Force personnel, before eventually being converted into a bog-standard hotel by the Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband, an independent German welfare organization. Yet in its mid-eighteenth-century heyday, when it was purchased by the prosperous Dutch–Prussian merchant, banker, and Catholic nobleman Thomas Franziskus de Cloots, the Schloss would have been an altogether idyllic place, easily living up to the name given to it by the Augustinian canons three centuries before: Vallis Gratiae, the “Val-de-Grâce” or “Valley of Grace,” called “Gnadenthal” in the rough German tongue.

It was here, on June 24, 1755, that Johann Baptist Hermann Maria Baron de Cloots was born into the lap of luxury and indulgence. The young baron possessed a precocious



Matthew Omolesky is a human rights lawyer, a researcher in the field of cultural heritage preservation, and a Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute.

intellect, which his father sought to channel by sending him to Catholic schools in Brussels and Mons, to the Collège du Plessis in Paris, and, finally, at the age of fourteen, to a military academy in Berlin. Along the way young Johann fell under the spell of his uncle, the historian and philologist Cornelius de Pauw, contributor to Diderot's *Encyclopédie* and author of *Recherches philosophiques sur les Américains*, a nonsensical but influential tract that argued "the Europeans who pass into America degenerate, as do the animals; a proof that the climate is unfavourable to the improvement of either man or animal," a contention that was treated with the appropriate level of contempt in Jefferson's renowned *Notes on the State of Virginia*. Cloots clearly preferred the life of the French philosophe to that of the Prussian cadet, and upon his father's death he abandoned his military training and conveyed his vast library (and even vaster inherited fortune) back to Paris, where he would henceforth go by the name Jean Baptiste Baron de Cloots du Val-de-Grâce.

In the City of Light, Cloots finally felt at home. He made the acquaintance of Enlightenment luminaries, including Rousseau and Voltaire, and wrote an obsequious play, *Voltaire triomphant*, to better ingratiate himself with the smart set. With the time and means to dedicate himself to scholarship, the baron would spend as many as fifteen hours a day with quill in hand, and by the end of 1781 he had finished a provocative treatise on Islam, *La Certitude des preuves du mahométisme*, written in response to

the Catholic apologist Abbé Nicolas-Sylvestre Bergier's *Certitude des preuves du christianisme*. Cloots's blunt and inflammatory conclusion — "better a Muslim than a Christian" — was almost wholly obscured by his unfortunate writing style, that of a dilettantish autodidact. The historian Ian Coller, in *Muslims and Citizens: Islam, Politics, and the French Revolution* (2020), rightly chides Cloots's reliance on a "vast and unkempt tangle of footnotes — and even footnotes to the footnotes — many running over numerous pages, and frequently banishing the main text to a single line" as "an apparatus worthy of Sterne, but without any detectable humor." Cloots was evidently taking after the erudite, eccentric Cornelius de Pauw, but the baron from Val-de-Grâce was not content to live out his life as an armchair anthropologist as his uncle had. In the late 1780s, Cloots undertook a Grand Tour across Greece, Asia Minor, North Africa, and back through Spain, during which time he came to the acute realization that "liberty belongs to the entire human race." Now Cloots was also following in the footsteps of another one of his intellectual idols, that "interesting madman" Rousseau. When he returned to Paris from his Mediterranean peregrinations, at the very moment the French Revolution was breaking out, Cloots found himself in a position to demonstrate just how interesting, and just how mad, he himself could be.

It was on July 19, 1790, in the run-up to the massive inaugural Fête de la Fédération, that Cloots entered the history books, not as an intolerant anti-religious provocateur, an Enlightenment salon gadfly, or an over-educated philosopher manqué, but as a fully fledged revolutionary. Cloots had arrived in front of the Salle du Manège, at

the north end of the Tuileries Gardens, accompanied by thirty-six outlandishly dressed Italians, Spaniards, Englishmen, Dutchmen, even Turks, Arabs, and Chaldeans, plus some out-of-work servants and opera house extras to round it all out, most of whom had been hired for twelve francs each to participate in a bit of astroturfing *avant la lettre*. Asked what their purpose was at the French Revolutionaries' official seat of deliberation, the visitors announced themselves as the Ambassade du Genre Humain, the "Embassy of the Human Race," a delegation sent from "the oppressed nations of the universe." "We come from Europe, we come from Asia, we come from America. We are Humanity," they exclaimed, while their ringleader, Baron de Cloots, rather immodestly appointed himself the official "Orator of the Human Race."

The President of the National Constituent Assembly, Jacques-François Menou, tactfully dismissed the envoy and his motley retinue, but in doing so made the profound mistake of flattering its members as "heralds of the new epoch." This praise, plus the Assembly's vote to abolish hereditary titles that very evening, was all the encouragement Cloots needed. After the Fête de la Fédération was over, he breathlessly and misleadingly described to his friend Fanny de Beauharnais how "in my capacity as ambassador of the human race, I was at the head of the foreigners in the palace galleries," how "we have won, we have triumphed" and how this victory "transports us forward two thousand years, through the swift progress of reason." Within two years

Cloots had, however, definitely made his mark on the revolution, abandoning his own hereditary titles (though naturally not his assets), renaming himself Anacharsis Cloots (after an ancient Scythian sage who had been the subject of a 1788 novel by Jean-Jacques Barthélemy), attaining French citizenship, successfully running for a seat in the National Convention, joining in with the militant Jacobins, and putting up 12,000 livres of his own money to arm a company of militiamen to defend the nascent French Republic from the forces of reaction. "You can do anything you like with bayonets, except sit on them" — so Talleyrand's famous quip goes, and it was clear that Cloots had no intention of sitting on his recently procured bayonets any more than he planned to rest on his laurels.

At no point during his meteoric political rise, however, did Cloots neglect about his most cherished cause célèbre — the eradication of organized religion. Rather, in his own words, "[I] redoubled my zeal against the pretended sovereigns of earth and heaven. I boldly preached that there is no god but Nature, no other sovereign but the human race — the people-god. The people is sufficient for itself. Nature kneels not before itself. Religion is the only obstacle to universal happiness. It is high time to destroy it." Waging his iconoclastic war on two fronts, against the sovereigns of Earth and the Sovereign of Heaven, Anacharsis Cloots voted on January 15, 1793, in favor of the execution of the deposed King Louis XVI, and later that year organized the sordid ceremony that converted the cathedral of Notre-Dame de Paris into a temple of "reason" and "freedom," filling the sacred space with busts of philosophers and parading an opera singer, gussied up like the Goddess of Liberty, up and down the aisles and ambulatories. As aristocrats and moderates were

marched into the blood-stained hecatomb of revolutionary sacrifice, the churches were, in John S. C. Abbott's telling, being systematically "stripped of their baptismal plate and other treasures, and the plunder was sent to the Convention. Processions paraded the streets, singing, derisively, Hallelujahs, and profaning with sacrilegious caricature all the ceremonies of religion. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered to an ass." It was all going according to Cloots's grand plan. "Here is the crisis of the universe," he announced, a time when "we will make a holy war" as "free men [who] are Gods on earth." The former baron would not rest, he continued, until an atheistic revolutionary republic had been established on the moon itself.

In Oswald Spengler's 1933 *Jahre der Entscheidung*, the German philosopher of history categorized left-wing revolutionary movements as a

spiritual mob [geistige Mob], led by failures from all the academic professions, the mentally invalided and inhibited, from which the gangsters of the liberal and Bolshevik uprisings emerge. The "dictatorship of the proletariat," that is, their own dictatorship achieved with the help of the proletariat, is supposed to be their revenge on the happy and well-off, a last resort to quench their sick vanity and vicious greed for power, both of which arise from a growing insecurity of self-esteem, the ultimate expression of corrupt and misguided instincts.

Spengler could very well have been writing about Anacharsis Cloots and his ilk, as opposed to the socialist revolutionaries of his own era. Today we can indeed recognize a veritable slew of mental illnesses at work in the curious case of Anacharsis Cloots — narcissistic personality disorder, grandiose delusional disorder, histrionic personality disorder, possibly the manic phase of a bipolar disorder, and almost certainly a negative father complex. The sheer theatricality of the bloody baron's performances at least managed to amuse later historians like Georges Avenel ("the human race itself is at the gate. It is waiting. Make way!"), Thomas Carlyle ("strange things may happen when a whole People goes mumming and miming"), and even Roberto Calasso ("Cloots' embassy, dispatched from the realm of operetta ... gave the final impetus to the decapitation of those noble titles with whose aroma operetta would be spiced"). Yet while Cloots may have at times exhibited some thespian talents, I tend to view his performance not as an *opéra bouffe* but as a tragic *azione sepolcrale*, the sort of thing Karl Kraus had in mind when, in *The Last Days of Mankind*, he lamented those "unthinkable years, out of sight and out of mind, inaccessible to memory and preserved only in bloodstained dreams, when operetta figures played out the tragedy of mankind."

Thanks to Cloots's efforts, for the first time in history, though by no means the last, Rousseau's conception of an ersatz, purely political "civil religion" was being put into practice. "The imposition of the civil religion," Ryszard Legutko has propounded, "was primarily a political operation with implications similar to those that were later to be seen in highly ideological regimes: the sovereign could get rid of nonbelievers and even punish with death those who betrayed the new religious dogmas." Among the first to pay the price would be those like the Martyrs of Compiègne, the eleven Discalced Carmelite nuns, three lay sisters, and two tertiaries sentenced to death during the Reign of Terror, merely for having persisted in living as a religious community despite a Revolutionary government order closing all women's monasteries. It is an inviolable

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Stained Glass of St. Luke, 2020 (Bill Wilson Studio)

historical law, as Reiner Stach observed, that “every attempt to create an enthusiastic community out of a modern mass society has culminated in bloodbaths, terror, and crushing disillusionment.” Visionaries like Anacharsis Cloots will invoke the name of the “people-god” while elevating themselves to the status of “Gods on earth,” but whatever they think of the People writ large, it is the individual writ small, in his or her capacity as a martyr or victim of political injustice, who is destined to be fed into the fiery furnace of revolutionary repression like a trifling lump of sea coal, and always by self-styled humanitarians like Cloots.

In his 2018 book *Skin in the Game*, Nassim Nicholas Taleb sensibly argued on behalf of localism, “simple practical rules,” and a “focus on our immediate environment,” and warned of the great danger of universalism, on the grounds that “the general and the abstract tend to attract self-righteous psychopaths ... modernity likes the abstract over the particular; social justice warriors have been accused of ‘treating people as categories, not individuals.’” Cloots was in many ways the paradigmatic “self-righteous psychopath,” obsessed with imposing his sense of social justice — which naturally differed markedly from the sense of social justice possessed by, say, the Vendéen peasants and Carmelite nuns being devoured by the ravenous jaws of the Revolution — via guillotines and bayonets if necessary. Paul Johnson, in his incomparable philippic *Intellectuals* (1988), found that “there seems to be, in the life of many millenarian intellectuals, a sinister climacteric, a cerebral menopause, which might be termed the Flight of Reason.” By the end of 1793, Anacharsis Cloots had undoubtedly reached that point. Driven mad with messianic hubris, and holding himself out as the “personal enemy of Jesus,” Cloots’s own tragicomedy was fated to end poorly.

Cloots, that great friend of humanity, had thrown his lot in with the ultra-radical Hébertistes, also known as the “Exaggerators,” whose deputy Jean-Baptiste Carrier had infamously been involved in the genocidal suppression of the Vendéen uprising. When the Hébertistes met at the Cordeliers Club, ritually threw a veil over the bust of Liberty, and declared a state of insurrection against the National Convention, the better to establish an even more violent and unrestrained Reign of Terror, the powers that be finally had enough. The leaders of the breakaway faction, including Cloots, were sent to the Revolutionary Tribunal, where an appointment was made for them to be “shaved with the national razor,” as various wags described Joseph-Ignace Guillotin’s “simple mechanism” of death. Accused of being an insurrectionist and a member of a “foreign plot” (being of Prussian birth, after all), Cloots defended himself pathetically: “if I have sinned it is by too much candor and naïveté. Marat used to tell me ‘Cloots, tu es une foutue bête [Cloots, you are a damned stupid].’” On March 24, 1794, just as self-awareness seemed perhaps to be dawning on the former nobleman turned revolutionist, it was time to have his head cleanly separated from its body by the scythe of equality. It had been quite a journey from the Valley of Grace to the steps of the guillotine, and it had come to a suitably dramatic culmination.

But the story of Anacharsis Cloots does actually not end on that grim day in early spring, when he and nineteen of his radical comrades met their collective and richly deserved fate as the Parisian crowd jeered the erstwhile Orator of the Human

Race, joking afterwards that he and his fellow Hébertistes “died like cowards without balls.” Cloots’s story would come to prefigure that of untold numbers of revolutionaries to come, those who would profess an allegiance to rational universalism before turning, after the inevitable Flight from Reason, to bloody-minded sectarian factionalism in the pursuit of raw power, embracing a quasi-religious faith in their mission while demonstrating a penchant for mass violence. We can see evidence of Cloots’s legacy all around us, whether it is in what Legutko has called the “demon in democracy,” that “totalitarian temptation” permeating ostensibly free societies, in the never-ending war on religious liberty in both socialist and liberal societies, or in the orgies of violence and cultural destruction that now routinely wrack the American body politic, with rioters and demonstrators roaming urban neighborhoods and interstates chanting slogans like “no borders, no walls, no USA at all.”

In *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel declared that the French Revolution’s sole “work and deed” was “death, and indeed a death that has no inner depth or fulfillment; ... the coldest, shallowest of deaths, with no more significance than cleaving a cabbage head or swallowing a gulp of water.” This could be Anacharsis Cloots’s epitaph, but as hard as it is to believe, this has proven an inspiring message to radicals the world over. Few today, even in France or Germany, would recognize the name Johann Baptist Hermann Maria Baron de Cloots, or Jean Baptiste Baron de Cloots du Val-de-Grâce, or the more familiar cognomen Anacharsis Cloots. Anacharsis who? But I suspect that Anacharsis Cloots will never die, not really. Indeed it is by his fruits, by his intellectual descendants who comprise the spiritual mob of our era, that we will continue to know him.

Anacharsis Cloots, that *foutue bête*, may have declared himself the “Orator of the Human Race,” but there were vast swathes of the human race that he wished to see consigned not just to the kitchen midden of history but to the blood-spattered charnel house of Revolution. For Cloots, history was supposed to end not in Immanuel Kant’s “kingdom of pure practical reason and its justice,” but in a literal shambles. Does such a person truly speak for the human race? No, and one’s gorge should rise at the very thought. A far better choice would be a figure such as Alexandre Lenoir, the self-taught archaeologist who bravely strove to preserve the vestiges of the French past even as the maniacal Cloots set about pulverizing them. Lenoir, outraged at the vandalism that took occurred after the National Convention’s August 1, 1793, mandate that the tombs of “former kings” be obliterated, worked tirelessly to place endangered artwork out of harm’s way at the Couvent des Petits-Augustins:

From the Abbey of Saint Denis, which appeared to be destroyed by fire from the profoundest depths of its dreary vaults to the utmost summit of its towering roof, I recovered the magnificent Mausolea Louis XII, François I, and Henri II, but with grief I write it, these chef-d’oeuvres of art had already experienced the fury of the barbarians: it was in 1793, that I collected the shattered remains, which I may yet restore to their original form. The tomb of François I is already exhibited in all its splendor, and that of Louis XII is about to be erected in the Saloon of the

Fifteenth Century; truly fortunate! should I become the means of inducing posterity to forget these criminal depredations.

The year Lenoir began his project in earnest was the year that Louis XVI was guillotined, Saint-Denis was desecrated, and Notre-Dame was secularized, yet the archaeologist persevered all the same. The following year, the Abbé Grégoire would issue his *Rapport sur les destructions opérées par le vandalisme*, which maintained that “barbarians and slaves despise the sciences and destroy artistic monuments; free men love and preserve them.” Truer words were rarely spoken by a French revolutionary.

One man — Alexandre Lenoir — had almost single-handedly managed to turn the tide, as visitors to the Basilica of Saint-Denis and the Musée national des Monuments Français can thankfully attest. Every single one of the monuments he rescued carries more

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weight than the entire corpus of Anacharsis Cloots’s spectacularly unfocused and self-destructive rhetorical drivel. What is more, Lenoir’s preservationist campaign would be indelibly imprinted on the French psyche, as evidenced by French President Emmanuel Macron’s unambiguous declaration, amidst the notorious outbreak of cultural vandalism that took place during the summer of 2020, that “the Republic won’t erase any name from its history. It will forget none of its artworks, it won’t take down statues.” It would be a very sick society indeed that, faced with the choice between vandals like Cloots and paragons of virtue like Lenoir, would opt for the former. And yet, while

Macron spoke those reassuring words, left-wing politicians in the United States were cheering on the rampant desecration of memorials, and university professors of archaeology were advising rioters on how most efficiently to topple monuments. Thomas Carlyle’s wonderment at Cloots’s success comes to mind: “then is it verily, as in Herr Tieck’s Drama, a *Verkehrte Welt*, or World Topsyturvid!”

It gets worse. On June 19, 2020, the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s highly respected and long-serving chairman of European paintings, Keith Christiansen, posted on his personal Instagram feed an eighteenth-century drawing in pen and ink and wash on paper, one depicting Alexandre Lenoir as he interrupts the profanation of Saint-Denis, his arms thrown wide in a pose reminiscent of the central figure in Jacques-Louis David’s *The Intervention of the Sabine Women*. Alongside the illustration, the curator appended the comment, uncontroversial in any epoch other than our benighted own: “Alexandre Lenoir battling the revolutionary zealots bent on destroying the royal tombs in Saint Denis. How many great works of art have been lost to the desire to rid ourselves of a past of which we don’t approve. And how grateful we are to people like Lenoir, who realized that their value — both artistic and historical — extended beyond a defining moment of social and political upheaval and change.”

For this heresy Christiansen was subjected to intense criticism by those like the Art + Museum Transparency collective, which accused him of “making a dog whistle of an equation of #BLM

activists with ‘revolutionary zealots.’” Max Hollein, the Met Museum’s director, cringingly apologized directly to the staff of the European paintings department, asserting that Christiansen’s entirely defensible Instagram post was “not only not appropriate and misguided in its judgment but simply wrong.” while telling the *New York Times* that “there is no doubt that the Met and its development is also connected with a logic of what is defined as white supremacy. Our ongoing efforts to not only diversify our collection but also our programs, narratives, contexts and staff will be further accelerated and will benefit in urgency and impact from this time.” Score one more for Anacharsis Cloots.

“Of all the needs of the human soul,” wrote Simon Weil in her 1949 essay “The Need for Roots: Prelude Towards a Declaration of Duties Towards Mankind,” “none is more vital than the past.” Lenoir grasped this, whereas Cloots, who fled his own past, and would have denied the existence of the human soul in any event, never could. And here we arrive at the border between the pre-modern and the modern. There was a time when, as Roberto Calasso poetically put it in *The Celestial Hunter*, “every thought” was “measured with the dead,” but in this modern world, predicated as it is on presentism, there is simply no room for anything but the concerns of the eternal present. Tom Wolfe perspicaciously observed that “most people, historically, have not lived their lives as if thinking, ‘I have only one life to live.’ Instead they have lived as if they are living their ancestors’ lives and their offspring’s lives.” Consider how architectural masterpieces like Milan’s Cathedral-Basilica of Santa Maria Nascente, the Cathedral Church of Saint Peter in Cologne, Westminster Abbey, and the Alhambra all took more than five hundred years to complete. Such a process could only unfold if the members of the societies involved felt themselves part of a cultural current that transcended individuals, generations, and regimes, a sense of enduring responsibility totally alien to our mercurial modern mores.

Henry James, in a notebook entry written in Oxford on September 29, 1894, expounded upon his masterly short tale “The Altar of the Dead,” wherein the main character

cherishes for the silent, for the patient, for the unrepenting dead, a tenderness in which all his private need of something, not of this world, to cherish, to be pious to, to make the object of a donation, finds a sacred, and almost a secret, expression. He is struck with the way they are forgotten, are unhallowed — unhonored, neglected, shoved out of sight; allowed to become much more than dead, even, then the fate that has overtaken them has made them. He is struck with the rudeness, the coldness, that surrounds their memory.

It was with good reason that Ernst Jünger regarded “the disappearance of ancestor worship as a characteristic of present-day decadence.” Cultural heritage preservationists like Alexandre Lenoir, by cherishing the silent, patient, unrepenting dead, can dispel a portion of the rudeness and coldness that saturates modern life. But in spite of those efforts, it feels like we are perched atop an inclined plane, the increasing steepness of which makes unavoidable a downward plunge into the sort of decadent “crisis of the universe” in which the Clootses of the world seem to revel and flourish, for a time at least.

Cosmic panic, desperation, and rootlessness lead to the likes of Anacharsis Cloots; historical continuity and a sense of belonging lead to the likes of Alexandre Lenoir.

It is absolutely crucial to regain that “sense of historical continuity, the sense of belonging to a succession of generations originating in the past and stretching into the future” of which Christopher Lasch wrote in his far-sighted *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (1979). Without it, all that is left is presentism, scientism, and an obsession with trivialities and mere survival. Elsewhere, in his equally valuable *The Minimal Self: Psychic Survival in Troubled Times*, Lasch cautioned that the “emphasis on the global dimensions of the survival issue — on the need for global controls and for the development of a ‘global mind’

— probably helps to undermine attachments to a particular place and thus to weaken still further the emotional basis on which any real interest in the future has to rest. Rootless men and women take no more interest in the future than they take in the past,” making them unable to “think constructively about the future instead of lapsing into cosmic panic and futuristic desperation,” a phenomenon very much in evidence when we consider popular reactions to, for example, fluctuations in global temperatures, or the 2019 novel coronavirus pandemic. Cosmic panic, desperation, and rootlessness lead to the likes of Anacharsis Cloots; historical continuity and a sense of belonging lead to the likes of Alexandre Lenoir. Choose accordingly.

In a September 2020 editorial published in the conservative daily newspaper *Magyar Nemzet*, Hungary’s Prime Minister Viktor

Orbán discussed his nation’s “struggle for spiritual sovereignty and intellectual freedom” and the ongoing “rebellion against political correctness, against the dictates of loopy liberal doctrine.” Hungarian conservatives, like their counterparts in Poland and elsewhere, have struggled to safeguard the “enveloping layers of tradition inherited from the lives of their great-grandparents, grandparents and parents” by, inter alia, facilitating the “integration of religion into the life of society, maintaining a spirit of tolerance for religious views ... in order to strengthen justice, public morals and the common good.” In doing so, Orbán and his fellow Christian democrats have proven once and for all that “the doctrine that ‘democracy can only be liberal’ — that golden calf, that monumental fetish — has been toppled.”

Such developments are patently unacceptable from the standpoint of liberal international organizations, particularly those that have been infiltrated by “Soros-style networks,” organizations that purportedly seek to, in Orbán’s words, “lead us to the happiness provided by liberal world values, world peace and world governance,” but are far more accomplished at taking “aim at the very things that are most important to us, the cornerstones of the political order we wish for, the values at the core of conservative-Christian democratic heritage — such as the nation, the family and religious tradition.” (As the *Holinsbed Chronicles* put it, “it is easie to raze, but hard to buyld.”)

But Hungary and Poland are not the only nations seeking to escape the “deadly embrace” of culturally destructive liberalism, as evidenced by what UnHerd’s Aris Roussinos has called the “irresistible rise of the civilization-state.” Countries including China, Russia, India, and Turkey (about three billion souls right there) are all seeking to “define their countries as distinctive civilisations with their own unique cultural values and political institutions” as they remold their “non-democratic, statist political

systems as a source of strength rather than weakness, and upturning the liberal-democratic triumphalism of the late 20th century.”

Bruno Maçães, formerly Portugal’s secretary of state for European affairs and now a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, has similarly written about the “attack of the civilization-state,” noting how the liberal West, in its obsession with universalism, instead chose

not to be a civilization at all but something closer to an operating system. It would not embody a rich tapestry of traditions and customs or pursue a religious doctrine or vision. Its principles were meant to be broad and formal, no more than an abstract framework within which different cultural possibilities could be explored. By being rooted in tolerance and democracy, Western values were not to stand for one particular way of life against another. Tolerance and democracy do not tell you how to live — they establish procedures, according to which those big questions may later be decided.

These particular procedures and values, in their current etiolated and degenerate state, turn out to have very little purchase beyond the narrow ambit of Western liberal societies, and not always there either. “Europe,” concluded Maçães, “may have been convinced that it was building a universal civilization. As it turned out, it was merely building its own,” and not a very robust one at that. The universal harmony, the “republic of the united individuals of the world” that Anacharsis Cloots sought at bayonet point failed in his time, and appears less likely than ever to come about in our own or any other era. This may not bode well for liberal Western hegemony, but it will at least guarantee a world not wholly given over to the veneration of that monumental fetish that is Cloots’s mythical “people-god.”

This does not mean that our collective cultural patrimony is at all safe, for there is a great deal left to demolish and no lack of powerful figures who would, to paraphrase former Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, give the vandals space to destroy. Admittedly, even the work of the preservationist Lenoir was not destined to last forever; the works that had been sheltered in the Couvent des Petits-Augustins were dispersed after the Bourbon restoration, and today the Musée national des Monuments Français mostly contains plaster casts of the original works. Still, his noble exertions undeniably inspired defenders of civilization for years to come, providing a template for people of conscience to follow. The writer Joseph Lavallée, in his appraisal of Lenoir’s crusade on behalf of France’s cultural heritage, commended how

The order, the art, the melancholy magic which Lenoir has exhibited in the arrangement of his Museum, give an idea at once of his mind, his genius, and his knowledge. His powerful hand seems as if supporting ages upon the brink of destruction, arranging each in its place, and preventing their annihilation, for the purpose of portraying their arts, their men of character, their tyrants, and frequently their ignorance: let us retrace with this artist the ages past.

And here we are provided with a fitting epitaph for the heroic Alexandre Lenoir, and more importantly an eminently reasonable clarion call for all those who grasp just how important the past is for the needs of the human soul, and just how destructive the forces of socialism, liberalism, scientism, secularism, and misguided utopianism have proven to be. It is precisely what is needed in yet another age that seems to be in revolt against all human sensibilities, but which just might be salvaged after all. ✎

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What to Expect From a Biden White House

Short answer: the worst.

by **George Neumayr**

On the campaign trail, Joe Biden vowed to be the “most progressive president” ever — a pledge that has been complicated by the Democrats’ inability to retake the Senate. Still, we can expect Biden and Kamala Harris to push radicalism aggressively in spite of that gridlock.

“The first thing I’d do is repeal those Trump tax cuts,” Biden said on multiple occasions during the campaign. That plan would appear to be off the table. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell can be counted on to block any tax-hiking legislation from the Democrats. But some of Biden’s other pledges don’t require legislative approval. He has said, “In the first 100 days of my administration, no one, no one will be deported at all,” a pledge which would fall within his executive powers.

This much is clear: Everything Trump has done on the immigration front through executive orders will vanish under Biden. He will use all of the powers of the executive branch to turn America as much as possible into a sanctuary country. Construction of Donald Trump’s wall will grind to a halt. Both Biden and Harris are committed to de facto open borders. Biden has even rejected Obama-era enforcement measures. He calls them a “mistake.” As he rolls back not only Trump’s immigration-related policies but even Obama’s, we can expect the crisis on America’s southern border to flare up yet again.

The Senate will likely resist Biden’s talk of extending amnesty and free health insurance to illegal immigrants, but it won’t be able to stop a raft of new executive orders that he will order to accommodate them. For Biden, an influx of illegal immigrants is not a threat but a “gift.” He has said that he considers illegal immigrants “already Americans, in my view.” They are, he says, “just waiting ... for a chance to be able to contribute fully.”

As a candidate, Biden didn’t even want ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) to arrest illegal immigrants guilty of drunk driving. “I think Joe Biden has lost his mind,” Tom Homan, former acting director of ICE, told the press. As president, Biden will now have the power to turn such musings into executive branch policy and render ICE impotent.

Biden also plans to immediately wipe away all of Trump’s travel bans on immigration from terrorist-ridden countries. He called that policy a “Muslim ban” and said that it conflicts with America’s commitment to “religious freedom,” a laughable claim given his plans to restrict the religious freedom of Christians.

Indeed, the first days of the Biden administration will represent open season on Christians. Biden will sign a welter of executive orders erasing the protections Trump granted them, starting with Trump’s lifting of Obamacare’s “contraceptive mandate.” Biden has said that he will jumpstart the Obama-era harassment of the Little Sisters of the Poor and other Christian groups for objecting to that mandate. He has vowed to suppress



George Neumayr is author of 'The Biden Deception.'



President Biden Will Try to California-ize the Nation

Strangling the auto industry, contract workers, and small businesses for the progressive cause.

by **Steven Greenhut**

White House, 2020 (Bill Wilson Studio)

religious freedom wherever it conflicts with “reproductive” and “LGBTQ” rights. Christians should gird themselves for the most hostile administration ever. Biden will pick up where Obama left off in his assault on the First Amendment and intensify it.

It is also certain that Biden, who famously flip-flopped on the Hyde Amendment prohibiting taxpayer funding of abortion, will turn the executive branch over to the abortion lobby of his party. All of Trump’s pro-life executive orders will disappear, and the State Department, among other federal agencies, will resume its Obama-era lobbying for abortion abroad. The full weight of the federal government will once again fall on the side of Planned Parenthood.

Biden is sure to make a great show of reversing every Trump-era policy across the federal government and in the military. “Transgender equality is the civil rights issue of our time,” he has said, promising to end Trump’s ban on transgender troops.

Biden will also make much noise about reversing Trump’s resistance to globalism. Biden has said that on his first day in office he will “rejoin the Paris Climate Accord,” which will mark the first of many overtures to the “international community.” Where Trump emphasized putting “America first,” Biden will accentuate “alliances” — though that won’t include Israel, an alliance sure to weaken under Biden as it did under Obama. Critics of Israel will crawl back to the State Department under Biden.

If he is unable to pass any meaningful legislation through Congress, which appears likely, Biden will have to placate progressives through the bells and whistles of executive orders — through which he will restore all the Obama-era regulations Trump eradicated and add many new ones, to the detriment of America’s economy — and dramatic personnel choices. Biden has already dangled before them such darlings as the gun-confiscating Beto O’Rourke, whom he wants to “solve the gun problem” for him. Obama named many such ideologically fanatical “czars” in his quest to please the Left. Biden will do the same.

During the campaign, he promised progressives that he would flood federal agencies with left-wing appointments. The working group that he formed with Bernie Sanders after the primaries, in

which Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC) headed up the climate change section, foreshadows the personnel choices to come. So does Symone Sanders, who worked for Bernie Sanders before joining the Biden campaign as a senior adviser. A self-described “rabid feminist,” she is exactly the kind of woke leftist that will populate Biden’s administration.

Radical retreats from the Obama years, combined with the radicals around Sanders and AOC, can all expect to find a cozy home in the Biden administration. The dominant media is already growing excited at the prospect of a cabinet and administration full of wild-eyed progressives. Among the figures under consideration, according to Axios, are Mike Bloomberg at the World Bank, Elizabeth Warren as Treasury Secretary, Pete Buttigieg as U.S. Ambassador to the UN, and Susan Rice as Secretary of State.

Biden will also throw out the welcome mat for the most swampy operatives in Washington. Biden’s entourage over the years has included such swamp rats as Ron Klain (a former Al Gore chief of staff) and Tom Donilon, a long-in-the-tooth lawyer who has worked in Washington since the days of Jimmy Carter. The Oval Office will overflow with such figures.

Finally, Biden will seek to stack the courts with liberal activists committed to accomplishing judicially what he can’t accomplish legislatively. “Gun manufacturers, I’m going to take you on and I’m going to beat you,” Biden has said. To make good on such promises, he will appoint to the courts opponents of the Second Amendment.

The Obama years, which saw the appointment of countless ACLU-style activists to the courts, serve as a preview of the kind of judges Biden will select. While Biden will have to put the Left’s court-packing plans on hold, he won’t hesitate to name open leftists to the bench. What size imprint this leaves on the law will depend on the degree to which the Senate opposes his choices.

A Biden administration represents a return to the failed Obama years. But in radicalism it is certain to go far beyond them. It will usher in four years of leftism, both old and new. But will a faltering Biden even be able to finish them? Will he hand the presidency off to Kamala Harris? These won’t be idle questions, as a shaky Biden takes office. Whatever happens, Americans are in for a very rough ride. ❧

Steven Greenhut is Western region director for the R Street Institute. Write to him at sgreenhut@rstreet.org.

At the onset of the COVID-19 shutdowns, Gov. Gavin Newsom raised eyebrows by repeatedly calling California a “nation state,” which usually refers to sovereign and largely homogenous countries with their own standing armies. California is wonderfully polyglot and, last time I checked, still part of the United States despite having the nation’s largest population and an international boundary. Such hubris earned mild rebukes even from mainstream media.

Newsom proudly used the “nation state” term as he sought to justify the use of California’s purchasing power to secure a good deal on personal protective equipment for the state’s health-care providers. He was frustrated at the admittedly slow federal response. “It’s not a cheap shot,” he said on MSNBC’s *Rachel Maddow Show*. “At the end of the day, they don’t have the masks at the national stockpile. We decided enough of the small ball.”

That’s fine enough, but what happened next is an allegory. Many lawmakers said this mask deal “lacked transparency and complained they did not get an adequate heads-up” before the governor’s TV appearance, as Capital Public Radio reported. The Chinese company delayed the delivery of the masks because it “twice failed to meet safety certification deadlines,” other deals fell through, and, months later, the state “received only a fraction of the promised supply.”

In other words, California did as it always does: boast about its trend-setting and visionary policies and its international-like leadership, then utterly fail to even manage the governmental basics one might expect in decidedly non-nation-states such as, say, Idaho or Rhode Island.

With a new Joe Biden administration, these fundamentals aren’t going to change. Unlike under President Trump, however, the federal administration won’t push back against California’s approach to immigration and environmentalism — and the new administration certainly will try to implement some of the state’s “bold” ideas at the national level.

As CalMatters explained recently, that likely will include an effort to boost the minimum wage nationally to California’s \$15-an-hour level. It will feature an effort to expand paid family leave for private workers, a push for a Green New Deal (or some modified version of it) designed to reduce carbon emissions, “common sense” bans on so-called assault weapons, and an expansion of limits on independent contracting.

On the plus side, the Democrats might at least embrace California’s relatively sensible (albeit overly taxed) approach to legalizing marijuana by rescinding the federal designation of marijuana as a dangerous drug. Even many Republicans, however, support that overdue change, so such reforms might have taken place under Trump, anyway.



California is, as any state official will tell you, the world's fifth-largest economy. Our population of forty million makes us home to one out of eight Americans. One of our fifty-eight counties, Los Angeles, is more populous than nine other states. We're geographically enormous, too. San Bernardino County is physically larger than nine states and the four smallest ones combined.

That enormity, combined with a lack of partisan competition, tends to swell our politicians' sense of grandeur. This tendency isn't new. Unburdened by the traditions of other regions, California officials have been willing to take a stab at unusual policies and embrace newfangled political experiments. The state had been a magnet for Americans (before it began chasing them away) as well as immigrants, which has made our politics less bridled to tradition.

California approved the initiative, referendum, and recall in 1911, under the direction of Progressive Gov. Hiram Johnson. More than a century later, no other state has embraced anything close to our free-wheeling direct democracy. The California Air Resources Board instituted emission controls in the 1970s that became the

model for U.S. car manufacturers. We're such a huge market that our standard became the de facto national standard.

Recently, the state approved the California Consumer Privacy Act. These rules — based largely on ones found in the European Union — will also become de facto standard nationwide. Tech companies will not be able to ignore them, and neither will Americans in the forty-nine other states. California lawmakers' arrogance won't change following the presidential election, but now Congress will try to impose these problematic regulatory policies on the entire country.

Other states have been wise enough not to echo California's cap-and-trade system that essentially taxes businesses for their carbon dioxide emissions — but California lawmakers still see it as a blueprint. We'll see echoes of these plans in whatever environmental new deals are offered in Congress.

As of August, California filed its hundredth lawsuit against the Trump administration, challenging federal actions on various subjects ranging from immigration law to emission standards. It's easy to think of such actions as posturing, but the state has had

a remarkable record of success in the federal courts. Instead of fighting back, the Biden administration will no doubt agree with California and pull back on Trump-era changes.

The unions that lobbied for the passage of Assembly Bill 5, which banned companies from using independent contractors, are taking that law to other legislatures. The law has been an unmitigated disaster. Instead of making freelance workers permanent employees and providing them with benefits, companies have been slashing jobs. The Legislature exempted one hundred industries from its provisions, but lawmakers remain proud of their "achievement." Despite its failure, Biden has promised to propose something similar in Congress.

California lawmakers' arrogance won't change following the presidential election, but now Congress will try to impose these problematic regulatory policies on the entire country.

In September, Gov. Newsom even announced, via executive order, a ban on the purchase of new internal-combustion vehicles beginning in 2035. That plan is little more than a publicity stunt — but it's a reminder that California is playing the long game, and will do as it chooses regardless of what it means for the rest of this supposedly united nation. But now this non-serious proposal has a reasonable chance of becoming federal law.

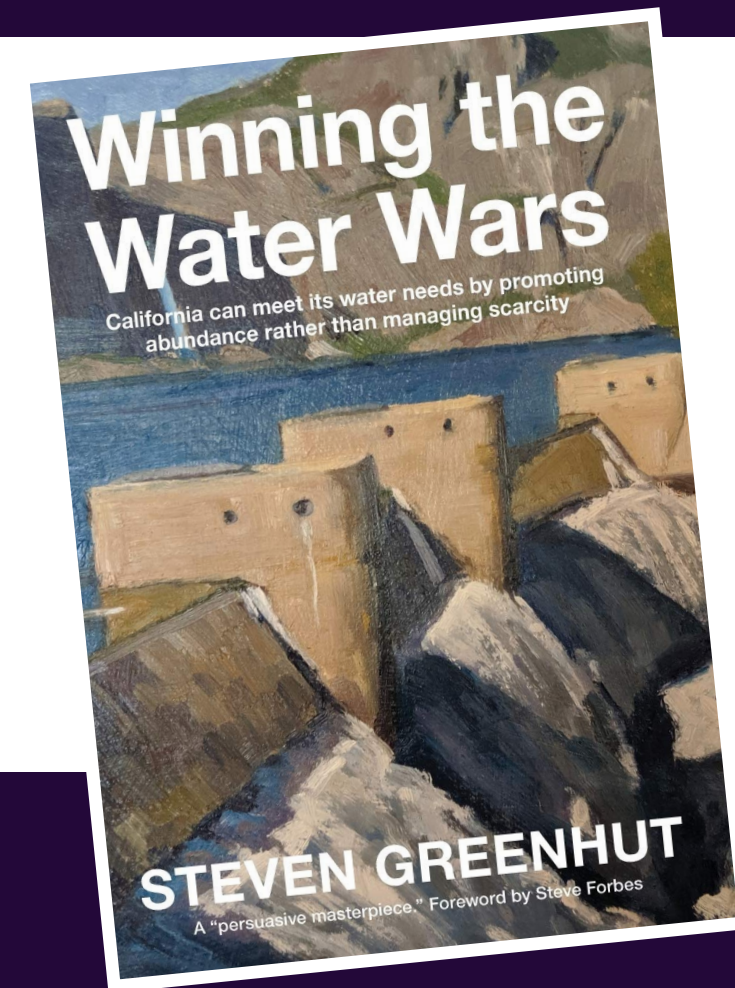
After my wife and I moved to California from Ohio, we found it odd how unattached Californians seemed to the rest of the country — and how little they knew about other states beyond, perhaps, Nevada. Provincialism is common throughout our country, but California is isolated with its population centers far from any bordering states. After twenty-two years here, we've seen how easy it is to view California as something of its own country.

This is indeed a magnificent state, despite its decades of poor governance. Unfortunately, thanks largely to its high-tax and regulatory policies, California's once-great infrastructure is crumbling. Its top-notch schools have fallen into mediocrity or worse.

California's cost of living and anti-business policies drive large numbers of Californians to states where governors spend less time bloviating about being nation states and more time tending to the roads, protecting the business climate, and, say, assuring that mask contracts are competently administered. With Democrats firmly in control in Washington, D.C., however, there may no longer be any way to run or hide.


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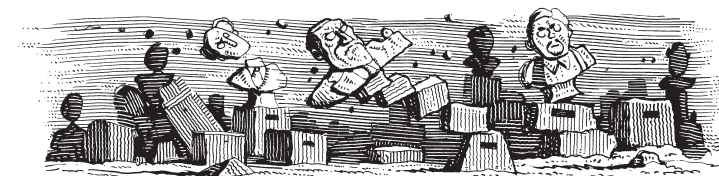
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LAUGHING MATTERS



**Biden's Presidential Strategy:
Don't Touch Anything**

Bad as things are, he'll only make them worse.

by Itxu Díaz

I have to work hard to hide that I'm happy about the presidential election. A journalist is a guy who is happy about things that make other people cry. It's not that we enjoy bombs; it's just that we love having something to say. They'll never admit it, but I suspect that even doctors feel a certain satisfaction when a patient enters the ER with a leg in one hand and garden shears in the other. I am that same doctor right now, watching the world's most important democracy plunge off a cliff into uncertainty and dementia. Of course, I would prefer not to have to write about this — but what can I say, the world is a hostile place, life is not a bed of roses, and there is no doubt that we columnists have more work every time a socialist cretin takes over a country. Besides, some of us are feeling the greatest pleasure a middle-aged man can experience these days, even if it is a pleasure that generates a justified hatred. I am talking about being able to look around, to put our hands on our hips, and exclaim with the greatest arrogance: I told you so! Sometimes I wonder why they don't stone us all as we leave the newspaper.

The year 2020 remains an extraordinary one for freedom. First they lock us up at home, then they muzzle us and socially distance us, then they prevent us from traveling around the world, and finally Dory from *Finding Nemo* wins the election. Biden is the new president of the United States, and he is the first to be surprised. No one would be surprised if his first statement to the press, with reporters swirling around his door, was: "Did I really run for president of the United States? I had no idea. Kamala takes care of that sort of thing. Go talk to her."

There are Americans who believe that Joe Biden will exercise restraint in the face of Harris's extremism. I am not surprised. There are also people who believe in unicorns. Most likely, the new president will now attempt his grand plan for economic revival, which encompasses a single, solitary point of action: raising every tax possible. But he won't stop there. Harris also has a plan to help the poor during this crisis. It consists of providing them with free access to abortion and sex changes. So I estimate that in about six months we will have a lot of new transsexuals, who will feel very fulfilled with their change of identity, and who will be able to enjoy their new sexually diverse lives begging at church entrances alongside the rest of the victims of the indiscriminate tax increase, and alongside mothers with chronic nightmares from having killed their own babies. The first thing a country loses on giving itself over to socialism is joy. If this nightmare doesn't happen, we just have to thank God and the blocking power of the Senate.

But Biden has a task even more urgent than sinking the economy, and that is to bring about the national reconciliation that he himself broke when he partnered with the



Itxu Díaz is a Spanish journalist, political satirist, and author. He has written nine books on topics as diverse as politics, music, and smart appliances. His most recent book is Todo iba bien (Everything Was Going Well).



Political Pollsters and Other False Prophets

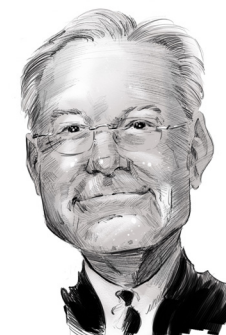
Ye shall know them by their fruits.

by David Catron

In 2020, public opinion pollsters once again did what they do best — they got it wrong. After collectively presiding over a humiliating failure to predict the correct winner of the 2016 presidential election, they had pledged to conduct a thorough examination of their methods and models in order to prevent another such debacle. It turned out that this was nothing but hot air. Most 2020 pre-election surveys were less accurate than they were in 2016. During the last week of the campaign, at least seven major national polls showed Biden leading Trump by double digits. The final Wall Street Journal/NBC News survey, for example, showed the former vice president with a 10 percent national lead. Biden's actual lead in the popular vote, as of this writing, was about a third of that after the ballots were counted.

The polls were also hopelessly skewed in a number of states. In Ohio, for example, the final RealClearPolitics average indicated that Biden was behind by only 1 point. President Trump won the state by 8.2 percent. The story was similar in Iowa. Trump allegedly led Biden in the Hawkeye State by a mere 2 points, yet he won by 8.2 percent. In Texas, the RealClearPolitics average showed an implausibly close race in which Biden was behind by only 1.3 percent. Trump won the Lone Star State by 5.8 percent. In Florida, Biden purportedly enjoyed a lead of 0.9 percent, yet President Trump won the Sunshine State by 3.4 percent. Nor were such disparities limited to the presidential race. The polls also predicted a “blue wave” in the House. Thus spake the Cook Political Report just before Election Day:

We now view a Democratic net gain of 10 to 15 seats as the likeliest outcome, with anything from five to 20 seats well within the realm of possibility. It could be valuable insurance if Democrats face a more challenging environment in 2022. A double-digit GOP loss could also generate a leadership challenge.... In our final House ratings, we're shifting eight more races in Democrats' direction, including three in the high-turnout Lone Star state. If the 27 races in our



David Catron is a recovering health-care consultant. In addition to his contributions to The American Spectator, his writing has appeared in PJ Media, the Providence Journal, Parnassus, Able Muse, and a variety of snotty literary publications.

Unfortunately, Biden will most likely make a peace offering, once again talking before the cameras of the whole televised world, as he did while the supporters of that stupid gesture set the streets on fire with racial hatred, encouraging sectarians and revolutionaries to take over the country at the expense of the other half of Americans, who want to work, live well, and party in peace.

For their part, the conservatives who have fiercely opposed Donald Trump already have what they wanted: a government as socialist as in Venezuela, headed by a guy as lukewarm as any European social democrat, with a vice president who could put any African dictator to shame. Now the right wing will be even more

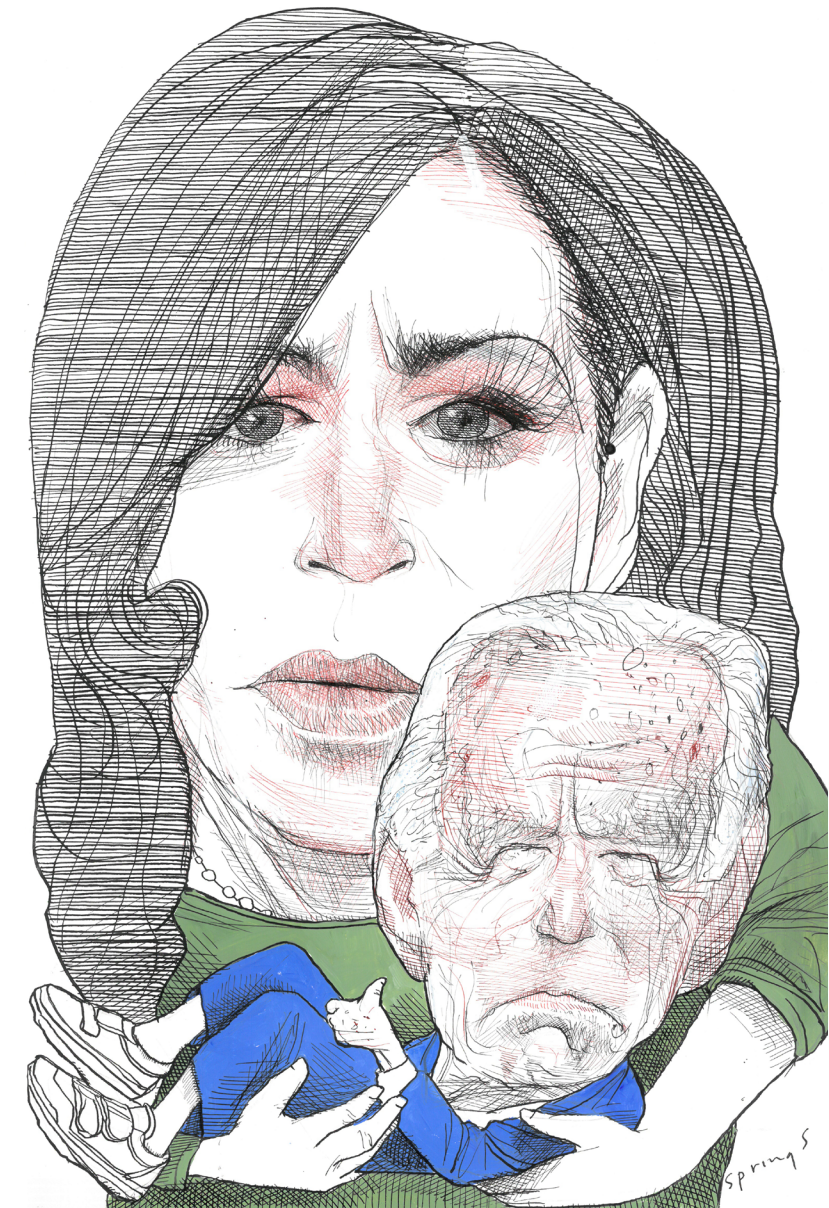
If Biden and Harris want to do something for their country, they should make an exception for once and tell the truth.

gagged in the media, the economy will collapse with a crash, the government will ask the world to forgive them for being Americans, and China will show mercy and might even order the coronavirus to return to the laboratory from which it escaped in Wuhan.

If Biden and Harris want to do something for their country, they should make an exception for once and tell the truth, even if it means admitting that they lied during the campaign when they claimed that they had the solution to the coronavirus and the resulting crisis. When business and our daily bread are at stake, propaganda becomes ineffective. The truth must be told even if it is horrible.

And they should concede, perhaps, that the world we knew is history. It might be uncomfortable to wake up from the dream, but it is worse to sleep in. Besides, the elections are over now: you can say horrible things to people and no one will set the streets on fire for it, among other things because arsonists are all in charge now. Say that we are going to die, that we are going to hell, that there is no future, that the virus has wiped us out, that we will have to fight with our fists because weapons are scarce. I don't know. Say what you want. Just don't turn the government into a cheap copy of Paulo Coelho, sending out cheerful messages telling us that everything will be fine, that we have already overcome the crisis, that now everything will be smooth sailing. Most people aren't as stoned as that Portuguese hippie billionaire to believe that, in the midst of a global pandemic, everything will be fine if only you want it badly enough.

I have no idea what the government should do. My talents go no further than criticizing political action. But I am convinced that in this labyrinth of uncertainty, it is only right to remind the solitary citizen of Nicolás Gómez Dávila's old maxim: “Real problems have no solution but history.” Once again, we need to ask the president not to solve anything, just to not get in the way. If he were capable of doing that, it would be Biden's first success since the beginning of his political career. But please take Harris with you too. ✎



Kamala Harris and Joe Biden, 2020 (John Springs)

violent mob. Whatever goals and direction the American people set for themselves with their president leading the way, the sooner a climate of normality, peace, and national unity is restored, the better. The law and order that Trump calls for is the only way if you want democracy. Fracture is the Left's only electoral trump card, but now that the elections are over, it is best that we all go back to toasting together, sharing the flag, taking to the streets, and blocking the arteries of major cities with harmony and love, sounding our horns and insulting one another as only old friends can. Bitterness does not generate prosperity. A little bit of good-humored disorder guarantees joy, the prelude to happiness. I know this statement will not be seconded by my theological masters, but I invoke the first commandment of the Law of Chesterton: “Drink because you are happy, but never because you are miserable.”



The Year of Conservative Women

New political role models are returning to the values held by original feminists and rejecting their modern perversions.

by Jessica Anderson

Twenty-twenty is the Year of the Woman. For real this time. Amy Coney Barrett is the first-ever female originalist justice to sit on the Supreme Court. A record number of conservative women were just elected to the House and Senate. These are strong, smart women who care about both their country and their families. When we look at the lives and views of these women, the false choice feminism has presented is exposed. For decades, feminists have only celebrated one type of woman: she is liberal and pro-choice.

Look no further than the contrast between the mainstream media's praise for Sen. Kamala Harris's vice-presidential nomination versus their response to Amy Coney Barrett's Supreme Court appointment. Harris was lauded for shattering the glass ceiling and making little girls' dreams come true; Barrett was smeared and turned into a caricature.

But conservative women are ready to reclaim feminism for what its founders intended. No more shall we choose between career and family, between empowerment and conservatism, between freedom and servitude. It's time for real feminism — led by conservative women.

Until 2020, one hundred years after the Nineteenth Amendment's ratification, "feminism" was largely defined by the far Left. The mainstream feminist movement rejects women for becoming mothers, doubting the transgender dogma, or simply calling ourselves conservatives. Many modern women like me believe in women's rights but feel unrepresented by the most visible women and feminists in our culture. But women like Justice Amy

Jessica Anderson serves as the Executive Director of Heritage Action, where she is responsible for the strategic vision and operations of Heritage Action. Before joining Heritage Action in 2018, Anderson served as Associate Director, Intergovernmental Affairs and Strategic Initiatives for the Office of Management and Budget in the Trump administration.

Coney Barrett are making feminism work for all women — and they're returning to the roots of what feminism is really all about.

To get at the heart of true feminism, you have to look back to the antebellum era. In 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and a group of proto-feminists gathered for the inaugural Seneca Falls Convention. The document they drew up, the Declaration of Sentiments, was a punchy take on Jefferson's Declaration. Their altered declaration of natural rights read, "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal."

Stanton, Anthony, and their followers worked tirelessly to extend the blessings of liberty and the promises of the Declaration to women as well as men. They wanted legal rights and equal treatment under the law — exactly what the Founders fought for. Anthony's efforts in particular led to the creation of the "Susan B. Anthony Amendment," which took over forty years to ratify in 1920 — well after her death.

After 1920, feminism largely went dormant. The Roaring Twenties took off, followed by the Depression, World War II, and the more conservative 1950s. But then came the Sixties.

Led by young radicals like Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan, feminism's second wave began pushing the limits of society. While the first wave pushed for legal equality, the second wave pushed to reshape the culture and bring a new era of personal autonomy. These feminists wanted to legalize abortion, emancipate women from what Friedan called the "comfortable concentration camp" of marriage through no-fault divorce, and pass the distinction-destroying Equal Rights Amendment. While Phyllis Schlafly stopped the ERA, *Roe v. Wade* advanced and the radical feminists had the upper hand. While some good certainly came of the second wave — think Andrea Dworkin's anti-porn crusade — it steered the movement off course.

"Third-wave feminism" made matters even worse. All pretense of fighting for legal rights was gone. In its place was a culture



Predictions, 2020 (Bill Wilson Studio)

Toss Up column were to split evenly down the middle, Democrats would net nine or ten seats.

It didn't quite turn out that way, of course. Not long after Election Day, David Wasserman, writing for the same organization, found himself singing a far different tune:

District-level polling has rarely led us — or the parties and groups investing in House races — so astray.... Republicans appear to have swept at least 18 of the 27 races in our Toss Up column, with Democrats leading precariously in only three of those races and another six up in the air. Republicans also appear to have won at least four of the races in our Lean Democratic column (FL-26, SC-01, TX-23 and TX-24) and even one race in our Likely Democratic column, where Miami Democratic Rep. Donna Shalala (FL-27) went down to defeat.

Meanwhile, the polls also indicated that the Democrats would regain the majority in the Senate. In Maine every poll since February indicated that incumbent GOP Sen. Susan Collins would be defeated by Democrat challenger Sara Gideon. Collins crushed Gideon by 9 points. Likewise, in North Carolina, the final six polls indicated that Democrat Cal Cunningham would defeat incumbent Republican Sen. Thom Tillis. The latter won. In Iowa, the final RealClearPolitics average indicated that incumbent Republican Sen. Joni Ernst was leading Democrat challenger Theresa Greenfield by slightly more than 1 point. Ernst won by 6.6 percent. And, despite expensive Democrat attempts to defeat them, Senate Majority Leader Mitch

McConnell (R-Ky.) and Senate Judiciary Chairman Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) won reelection.

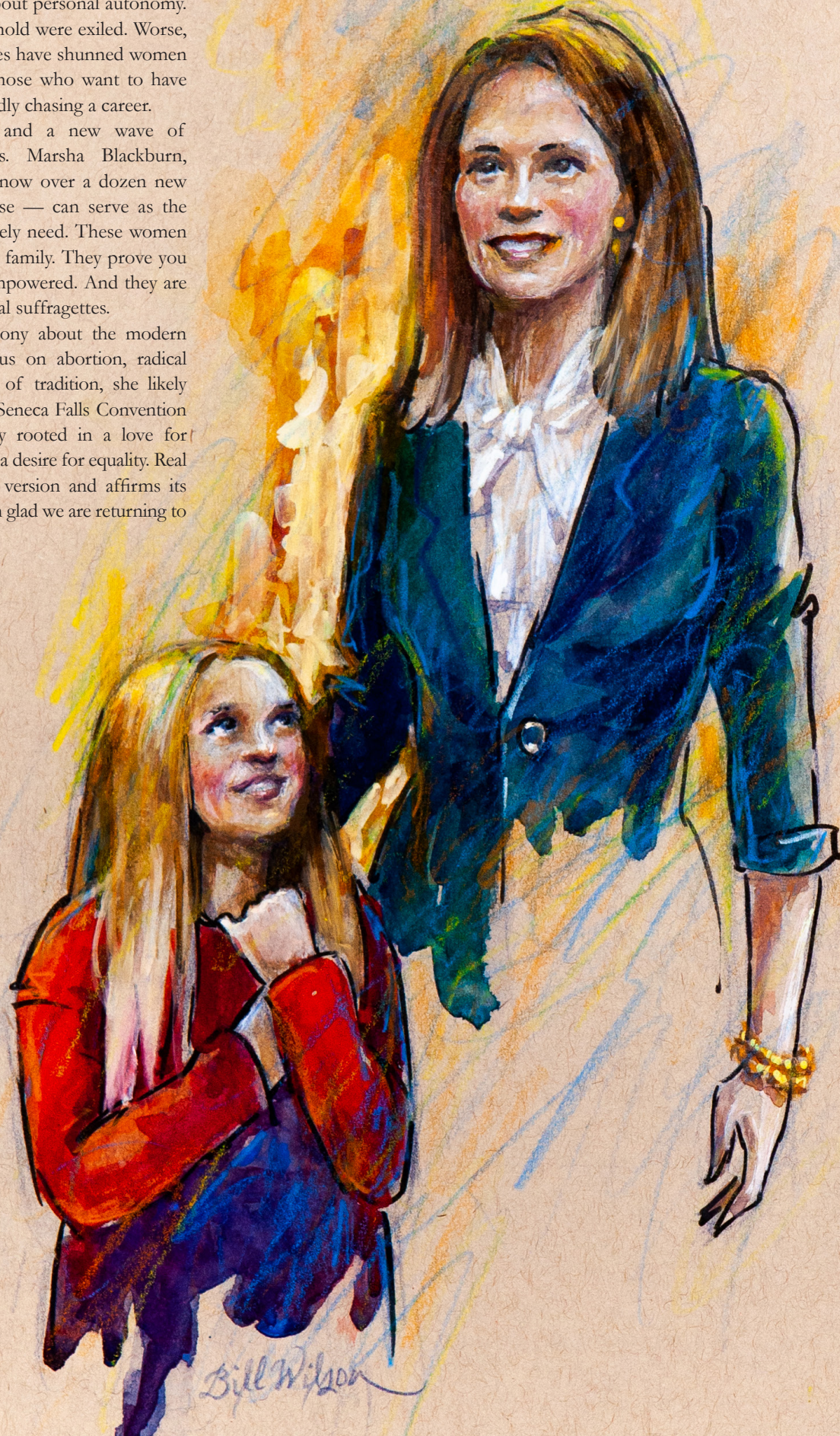
Unfortunately for the Democrats, the only remaining hope they have of seizing control of the Senate lies in Georgia. In November's election, Republican incumbent Sen. David Perdue fell just below the 50 percent threshold required to avoid a runoff against Democrat challenger Jon Ossoff. And incumbent Sen. Kelly Loeffler will also face a runoff against Democrat challenger Raphael Warnock because she split the Republican vote with GOP Rep. Doug Collins. A lot of Democrats have already descended on Georgia, and they will spend stupendous amounts of money to defeat these two GOP senators on January 5. The good news for Republicans is that Ossoff is in the habit of losing and Warnock has never received more than 33 percent of the vote. Neither Loeffler nor Perdue is in serious danger.

So what are we to make of the pollsters? "Ye shall know them by their fruits ... a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit." Absent the Elizabethan vernacular, this obviously means the pollsters are not really in the business of measuring public opinion on the issues of the day. They don't earn their paychecks by conducting "scientific" polls. They are paid by the false prophets of the corporate media to reinforce Democrat propaganda and suppress Republican turnout by inculcating the party line in the minds of the voters. In 2016, this failed in the presidential election. In 2020, it failed in the House and Senate elections. As to President Trump's second term, we may ultimately be at the mercy of Supreme Court justices and congressional Republicans. One hesitates to speculate about the fruit these trees will bring forth. ❧

war. Expanding beyond women's rights, the third wave bought into "intersectionality" and fully embraced left-wing politics of power. It narrowed its political vision, becoming a movement purely about personal autonomy. Women who didn't fit the new mold were exiled. Worse, modern feminists since the Sixties have shunned women who prefer to stay home and those who want to have children instead of single-mindedly chasing a career.

But Amy Coney Barrett and a new wave of conservative women — Sens. Marsha Blackburn, Joni Ernst, Kelly Loeffler, and now over a dozen new Republican women in the House — can serve as the new role models we so desperately need. These women prove you can have a career and family. They prove you don't have to be radical to be empowered. And they are fulfilling the dream of the original suffragettes.

If you told Susan B. Anthony about the modern feminist movement and its focus on abortion, radical libertinism, and the destruction of tradition, she likely would have been horrified. The Seneca Falls Convention and early feminism were deeply rooted in a love for America, religious sentiment, and a desire for equality. Real feminism rejects today's narrow version and affirms its founders' values, and I for one am glad we are returning to its original intent. ❧



Whither the Judicial Wars Under President Joe Biden?

Here's a nice thought: maybe leftists can stop treating judges as legislators.

by Doug Bandow

Liberal Democrats were shocked when President Donald Trump appointed conservatives to the federal bench. True, there were vacancies. He was the duly elected president. The Senate had the constitutional authority to approve nominees. But whatever were Republicans thinking?

This was outrageous misconduct, screamed people who had welcomed the activist liberal court of the 1960s and 1970s. They lionized jurists who ignored the text in the search for penumbras and emanations upon which to reach progressive policy results. New "rights" were discovered, almost daily it sometimes seemed, highlighted by the 1973 abortion case *Roe v. Wade*.

But liberal judges could not ignore the text entirely: too many average folks still venerated the Constitution and believed that it had some relationship to the operation of the U.S. government. So pretense was maintained. Experienced progressive lawyers would at least mention a legal document before joyously making up their preferred result. Then a vote was duly held, like in any other legislative body, and the Constitution was magically amended.

Author Michael Rips contended, "The choice of any interpretative scheme is inherently arbitrary." But that is flagrantly untrue. There are two broad jurisprudential approaches: put into effect to the best of your ability the law as written or make up what you want the law to be. That all answers will not be obvious doesn't change the fact that, for judges, only the first objective is valid.

Republicans spent the 1960s railing against activist judges. But the GOP had no effective strategy to transform the judiciary. Richard Nixon made four high court appointments. Harry Blackmun trended left. Chief Justice Warren Burger was an ineffective moderate conservative. Lewis Powell and William Rehnquist possessed more serious judicial philosophies but were desperately outnumbered.

President Jerry Ford paid little attention to the issue, naming John Paul Stevens, a statist especially hostile to religious liberty, who enthusiastically joined the Supreme Court's liberal wing. Reagan's record was mixed. He anointed the moderate Sandra Day O'Connor to be the court's first female member. Antonin Scalia was next, joining the



Doug Bandow is a Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute and former Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan. A graduate of Stanford Law School, he is a member of the California and D.C. bars. He is the author of several books, including The Politics of Plunder: Misgovernment in Washington and The Politics of Envy: Statism as Theology.



body before Democrats awoke to the danger posed by originalist thinkers. For the next vacancy Reagan nominated Robert Bork, a noted scholarly advocate of judicial restraint.

The Left understood the stakes better than Reagan did. Sen. Ted Kennedy launched an effective, though viciously untrue, attack:

Robert Bork's America is a land in which women would be forced into back-alley abortions, blacks would sit at segregated lunch counters, rogue police could break down citizens' doors in midnight raids, and schoolchildren could not be taught about evolution, writers and artists could be censored at the whim of the Government, and the doors of the Federal courts would be shut on the fingers of millions of citizens.

Bork was defeated, resulting in the appointment of Anthony Kennedy, who infamously became the court's swing vote. George H. W. Bush first chose David Souter, another leftie in conservative disguise. Then came Clarence Thomas, a genuine hit. George W. Bush offered John Roberts, a disappointingly "institutionalist" chief justice, and Samuel Alito.

President Donald Trump did better. The ruthless but effective Mitch McConnell refused to hold hearings on Barack Obama's nominee to fill Antonin Scalia's seat, creating an immediate vacancy for Trump to fill with Neil Gorsuch. Next up was Brett Kavanaugh. And then, most recently, Amy Coney Barrett.

Although predicting a justice's future course is dangerous, Barrett appears to be a solid conservative with a concern for civil liberties. She cited Scalia, a leading proponent of "originalism," for whom she clerked, as her judicial model. "Judges are not policymakers,"

she observed. "A judge must apply the law as written." She ensures a general conservative/libertarian majority.

Her personal life also adds to the court's diversity. A devout Catholic, she adopted two children from Haiti. One of her more inspiring advocates was a blind student who testified about how Barrett assisted her; the latter later clerked for Barrett.

Only forty-eight years old, the newest justice could have a long tenure on the Supreme Court. (Thomas was forty-three when he was confirmed and so far has served twenty-nine years.) She combines a reputation for well-crafted opinions with a winsome personality. With great understatement, Circuit Court Judge Laurence Silberman observed, "Her rhetoric would be much less combustible." She might persuade colleagues and assemble majorities in a way that Scalia was never able to do. No wonder her selection traumatized the gentle spirits of the Left.

Indeed, the wailing and gnashing of teeth among the "make it up" school of judicial thought reached epic proportions. Imagine, she believes that the Constitution means something! Channeling Ted Kennedy, Sen. Ed Markey (D-Mass.), an attorney who knows better, denounced originalism, applying the law as written, as "racist," "sexist," "homophobic," and "a fancy word for discrimination." *Guardian* columnist Arwa Mahdawi suffered a similar intellectual breakdown, declaring, "Goodbye civil rights: Amy Coney Barrett's America is a terrifying place."

Even more threatening was the reaction of Democratic politicians who believe the Constitution imposes the latest Democratic Party platform. After years of using the judiciary to implement policies that were rejected by the public, the Left was shocked, shocked, to discover that it sometimes lost court cases. So liberals developed a strange new respect for democracy and the will of the people. Upset at McConnell's hardball but unexceptional tactics — historically, presidents have had only middling success in filling election-year vacancies when the opposing party controls the Senate — Democrats decided that reconquest of the judicial branch was essential. The only judicial qualification required is an ideological commitment to the expansive state, progressive projects, and official coercion.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer suggested blocking all nominations by future GOP presidents "except in extraordinary circumstances." Other lefties took up past Republican proposals, such as limiting the Supreme Court's jurisdiction — that is, what cases it could hear — and impeaching current justices (one or all of Trump's appointees). Common in the 1960s, such measures were contemptuously dismissed by liberals who then believed in judicial review.

But as hope for a "blue wave" on November 3 grew, the progressive mind ran rampant. The most elaborate schemes involved killing the Senate filibuster and adding two, four, ten, or even more justices to the Supreme Court. To make the transformation permanent, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico would be turned into states, adding enough new lawmakers to ensure a permanent Democratic majority.

Alas, the Left's hope to engage in brutal political engineering went a-glimmering. Biden, a former Senate Judiciary Committee chairman, avoided committing himself on court-packing and proposed appointing a vacuous bipartisan commission to study the issue. On Election Day Democrats proved weaker than expected and immediately formed a circular firing squad over congressional losses.

Nevertheless, bipartisan judicial reform would be a worthy goal — and might be possible given present political divisions. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) introduced a constitutional amendment to prevent court-packing. A more far-reaching measure would be both more effective and likely to pass.

Here's what that could look like: Set nine as the number of high court justices, but allow Congress to add or subtract members by a two-thirds vote, thus requiring more than a transient majority. Set judicial terms, ensuring regular rotation in office. The main objective would be to ensure that nominations are regularly spread among presidents, with appointments no longer viewed as almost a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reshape the law. Another option, rather more complicated, would be to create a rotational model using Circuit Court judges.

Although predicting a justice's future course is dangerous, Barrett appears to be a solid conservative with a concern for civil liberties.

Moreover, streamline the constitutional amendment process. Of course, the nation's governing document is meant to secure fundamental liberties and should not be easy to revise. But the extreme difficulty in changing the Constitution as popular sentiments and political balances evolve encourages frustrated activists to look for a workaround. Which means turning to judges to effectively amend the nation's basic law.

So, ease the process. For instance, drop the number of legislators or states proposing an amendment to 60 percent and the number of states required for ratification to two-thirds. Allow ratification if approved by 60 percent of voters in a national referendum. Encourage activists to see political, not judicial, action as the proper venue for updating the Constitution.

Most important, stop asking judges to act like legislators. Democrats have gained a new appreciation for the imperative to win political battles. When they fail, as they did in November in many states, they should redouble their organizing efforts rather than turn judges into a second policy front. If you want to transform society, win people's support for doing so.

Both Democrats and Republicans are shameless hypocrites and opportunists. Schumer would have acted like McConnell in similar circumstances. But there is at least one critical difference among the contending political forces.

Progressives consider a judge to be another form of legislator, whose decisions are to be determined by results. Members of the judicial Right are more likely to view judges as judges, tasked with putting laws and constitutions created by others into effect. The latter philosophy is not guaranteed to yield the policy results personally desired. Today, Democratic proposals to further politicize the courts pose a far greater threat to American democracy than anything the GOP has done in filling court vacancies with judges who believe it is the law they are supposed to interpret. ❧



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China's Very Good Year

From manufacturing to Hollywood, the Communist Party has benefited from 2020's chaos.

by John Jiang

The Year of the Rat, 2020, began poorly for China. Hong Kong was in an uproar, and its protesters were enjoying international sympathy. The Communist Party's policies toward Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang were being widely condemned as excessive, even genocidal. Consumers, particularly in America, had begun to boycott Chinese goods in the backlash over pro-China censorship by the NBA, Blizzard Entertainment, and other ostensibly American companies. Tariffs had precipitated a dramatic decline in Chinese exports to the United States. The world had woken up to the Communist Party's hegemonic ambitions, and it seemed that a pushback had begun under American leadership.

The ensuing eleven months have proven to be a disaster: for those who have lost their lives or livelihoods to COVID-19 and government incompetence, for those whose freedoms are being wrested away across the West and the world, for trust in public institutions and global bodies like the World Health Organization, and for unity here in the United States, where the mail-in election has turned into a fiasco like none other. And 2020 has also been a disaster for the global response to the Communist Party, which has, through a mix of brute force and opportunism, maneuvered into a stronger position than ever.

China and its communist bureaucrats have had a very good year.

Such an end to 2020 would have seemed absurd as the world watched the coronavirus tear through Wuhan in January and February. Cases were doubling every week, and despite Beijing's staid demeanor about the whole situation, apocalyptic scenes of hazmat-suited officials and of patients lying in overcrowded hospital hallways were going viral online. The timing could not have been worse: it was Chinese New Year, and tens of millions were on the move into, out of, and through Wuhan, a hub city at the heart of the world's largest high-speed rail network. Even as other countries began announcing dozens of cases, all eyes were on Wuhan as the official death toll shot past one thousand in early February and then three thousand in March.

As the Communist Party's resources were being tested, so was its ideology. The story of Li Wenliang, the whistleblower doctor who was reprimanded by local authorities for "spreading rumors" about a viral outbreak and who later died of the coronavirus on February 7, became a lightning rod for criticism of the communist system's repressiveness, incompetence, and emphasis on conformity.



John Jiang is a senior in college and an alumnus of The American Spectator's Young Writers Program.

All of this criticism was well-deserved, and indeed the communist government has the blood of many Britons, Americans, and Indians, in addition to Chinese, on its hands: it took over a month, from the first case of COVID-19 being identified on December 8, 2019, to the introduction of screening measures on January 14, 2020, for Wuhan officials to respond to the outbreak. China's bureaucrats either denied or downplayed the risk of human-to-human transmission until the country's Health Commission finally acknowledged reality on January 20. Had the situation been made clear to the world at least a few weeks prior, strict border controls might have spared many countries the worst of the pandemic.

But in a decisive twist of fate, China crushed its own outbreak even as it infected the rest of the world. The crackdown was brutal: videos emerged of Wuhan officials welding shut the apartment doors of infected citizens to keep them contained. But it seemed to work. Since mid-March, the country has declared virtually no new cases of coronavirus outside of international travellers. In the United States, meanwhile, case numbers continue to dominate headlines as states stumble through ruinous cycles of lockdowns. Whether China is truly virus-free or has merely ceased reporting the real numbers is almost beside the point: the factories are working again, and the party has, with the support of Western media, put on a clean face for the rest of the world.

In sum, the course of the pandemic has been a decisive, and wholly undeserved, success for the Communist Party on several fronts.

In American politics, the virus gave the Biden campaign and the media establishment a cudgel with which to clobber President Trump and to push for unacceptable curtailments of civil liberty. A Beijing-backed Biden takeover of the White House would place Chinese influence in the upper echelons of the American government, on top of removing Trump's adversarial administration. Suppose that a President Biden "listened to the experts" and backed further indefinite lockdowns with the full force of federal mandate. Between that and an end to the trade war, Xi Jinping and his Standing Committee would be popping open *baijiu* to celebrate the end of American global leadership.

The pandemic has also allowed China to implicitly promote its authoritarian system as a viable alternative to America's own. The Chinese government has been quick to praise its own decisiveness, while skeptics accuse it of fudging the case numbers. In either case, an authoritarian system — whether through its executive power or its ability to lie to its own citizens and the world — allowed China to reboot its manufacturing only two or three



Xi Jinping, 2020 (John Springs)

months after it had shut down. Its economy in 2021 is expected to be 10 percent larger than it was in 2019, while America's economy suffers and Europe's shrinks dramatically. For the first time in a decade, inbound mergers and acquisitions investment has surpassed outbound investment for China as investors bet that the Chinese middle class will buoy the coming recovery.

Potentially worse than the immediate effects of the pandemic will be the lasting question of culpability. The answer to the blame game had been unambiguous in the first few months of the year, when China and the World Health Organization (WHO) were caught in a series of bald-faced lies about the state of the outbreak. The waters have been muddied since then. According to Pew Research, 61 percent of people in the developed world believe that China did a bad job "dealing with the coronavirus outbreak," compared to 37 percent with a positive view of China's performance. Views on America, however, are substantially worse, with 84 percent responding "bad" to 15 percent "good." The numbers for the WHO are exasperating: despite it kowtowing to downplay the outbreak during the crucial early days, nearly two-thirds of respondents in all surveyed countries reckon that the WHO did a "good job" with the pandemic.

Back in July, Pew found that almost 80 percent of Americans thought that the Chinese government deserved "a great deal/a fair amount" of blame for "the global spread of the virus." A more recent poll, conducted by the Associated Press in September, found that only 47 percent of U.S. adults blame the "governments of other countries" (read: China) for the outbreak situation in the United States. By contrast, 56 percent assign significant blame to the U.S. government, including 79 percent of Democrats. The anger of Americans, and in particular Democrats, has been directed inward. To understand why, look no further than the Biden campaign's line on coronavirus, pushed daily by CNN, that elected Republicans personally murdered two hundred thousand Americans. As the White House flips in January, you can bet that history will be rewritten to assign all blame for the pandemic to President Trump.

Growing Soft Power

The closing months of 2019 seemed, at the time, to be a turning point in the fight to resist the Communist Party's growing foreign influence. Back-to-back headline-grabbing censorship scandals had combined into a conflagration that threatened to scorch the party's credibility.

On October 2, 2019, Apple drew widespread media attention and criticism after it bowed to pressure from China and banned an app from its App Store that protesters in Hong Kong had

been using to track police movements. On October 8, Activision Blizzard, a U.S.-based (but partly Chinese-owned) video-game developer and publisher, punished the winner of an online game tournament after he spoke in support of Hong Kong's protest movement in a post-match interview. Even more memorable was the National Basketball Association controversy, in which China virtually severed its ties with the NBA over a pro-Hong Kong tweet by Houston Rockets general manager Daryl Morey, causing the NBA leadership to apologize and reprimand him. The grassroots backlash against the association, and against every corporation that had acceded to Chinese pressure, was ferocious — the issue of foreign influence had suddenly become personal for millions of people. The Communist Party had at last overplayed its hand, and it appeared that a reckoning was imminent.

As it turns out, 2020 had other plans in store. Chinese attempts to censor foreign organizations have continued, and the targets of these attempts have complied at alarming rates. Despite this, media attention on the issue has all but ceased. In April of this year, the European Union agreed to self-censor in a letter published in China's English-language newspaper *China Daily*, removing a reference

The example of Hollywood demonstrates how China has turned Western soft power against the West.

to China as the source of the coronavirus outbreak. On June 10, a Serbian professional football club fired one of its players after his father criticized the Communist Party. Two days later, it was revealed that the now-ubiquitous videoconferencing company Zoom had suspended multiple users who were planning to use the platform to coordinate a commemoration of the Tiananmen Square Massacre. None of these incidents received much attention. When was the last time that anyone mentioned that millions of Americans now telecommute to work on an app that censors on behalf of the Chinese government?

Hollywood remains the quintessential example of corporate profit-seeking butting heads with free expression. Most Americans witness dozens of subtle attempts to shape their perception of China through Hollywood movies every year, whether in the form of inclusion (of the Chinese space station in *Gravity*, which saves the protagonist from certain death) or exclusion (of references to a zombie virus originating in China when *World War Z* was adapted from its source book). Disney's live-action *Mulan*, though a flop with critics on both sides of the Pacific when released earlier this year, painted a picturesque image of Xinjiang despite the ongoing atrocities against Uighur Muslims there.

Chinese influence in Hollywood derives its potency from a nexus of money and corporate consolidation. The country's censors allow in exactly thirty-four American films per year, and these coveted slots are fought over by the Big Five American film studios: Universal Pictures, Paramount Pictures, Warner Bros. Pictures, Walt Disney Pictures, and Columbia Pictures. Studios do not know whether their latest blockbuster will be admitted until it is shown in full to Chinese officials, leading to self-censorship from the beginning of the film creation process in a bid to maximize each movie's chances of acceptance and therefore access to a box office worth billions of dollars. Consequently, dozens of movies that never make it into the Chinese market are nonetheless created with Chinese sensibilities in mind.

The major studios have every incentive to avoid offending China at all costs. Disney's colossal size is a source of much resentment and envy in the entertainment industry, but it becomes a disadvantage when dealing with the Communist Party. It owns immensely profitable theme parks and other auxiliary operations across China — all of which could be hamstrung at a moment's notice if its film distribution arm happens to cross a line regarding Tibet or human rights. This guarantees an unspoken commitment to self-censorship at every level of the corporation.

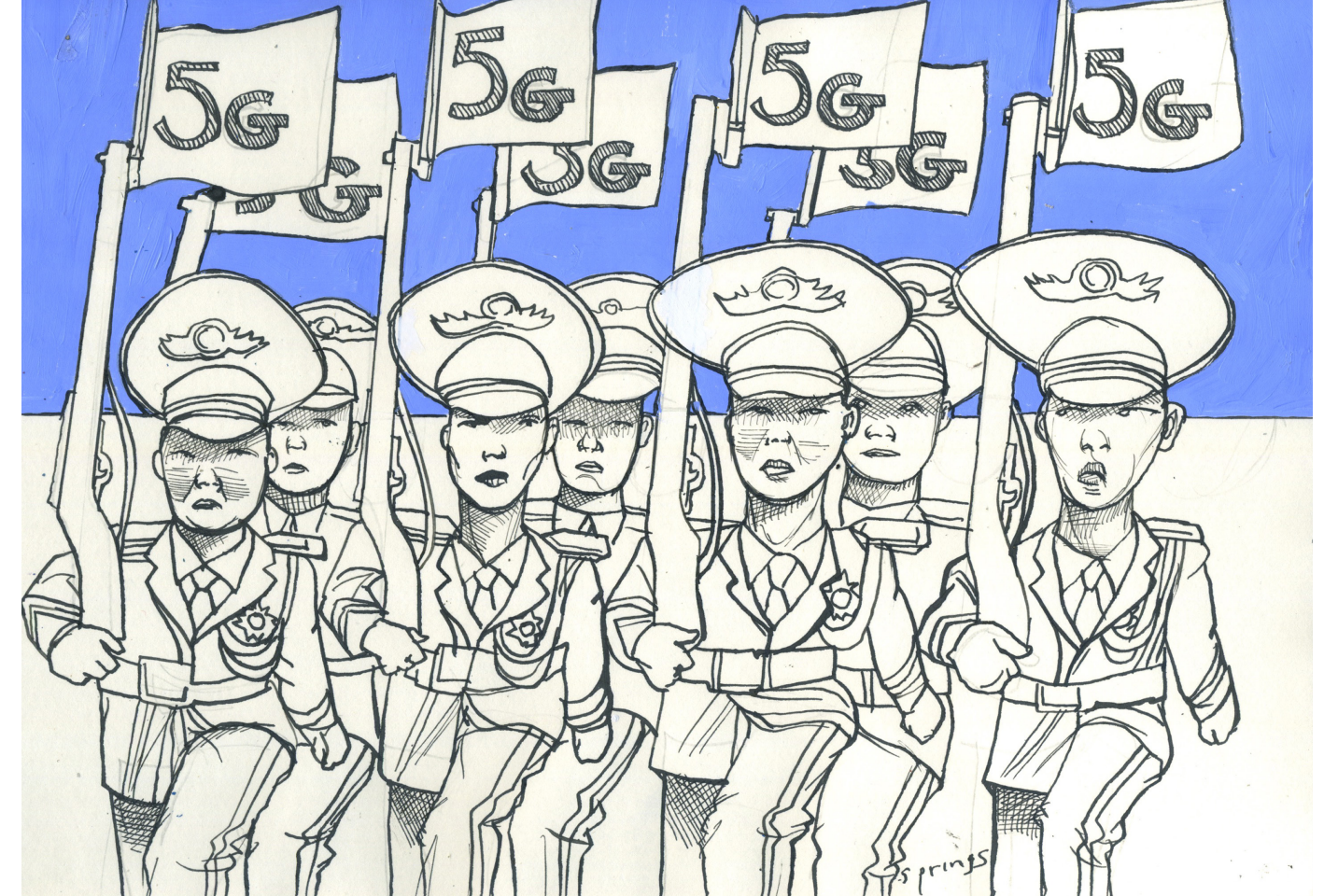
The continuing fallout of the pandemic will greatly accelerate this phenomenon. China began this year with a box office worth \$9.7 billion to America's \$11.1 billion. Throughout the course of 2020, lockdowns have all but crippled the U.S. cinema industry, while China's theaters began reopening in May. The Chinese market's rise to the largest in the world, previously expected to occur sometime in 2021, has instead happened a year ahead of schedule. For studios looking to continue churning out blockbusters, access to China appears increasingly like a financial necessity more than a bonus.

Bitter Medicine

How should America and its allies counter China's encroachment? Any response must first acknowledge what has not worked. The list is, unfortunately, long. The year 2020 has, in many ways, marked the death of the old pipe dream that communist authoritarianism can be undermined through Western soft power alone. This may still be possible in a place like North Korea, with its universal poverty and death penalties for consuming Western media. Chinese audiences are evidently not so easily swayed; the example of Hollywood demonstrates how China has turned Western soft power against the West.

It is also time to be realistic about the idea that America can educate a generation of Chinese college students to bring liberalism and democracy to China. As many professors and university administrations have discovered this year, such students are more likely to bring Chinese ultranationalism to America instead — and if they're bringing anything back to China with them, it's probably American technology.

Countering China's attempts to hijack American soft power has also proven difficult. This May, Sen. Ted Cruz introduced the SCRIPT Act, prohibiting studios from accessing federal funds for movies that have been altered to suit Chinese censors. It is the strongest move yet by an elected representative to combat Chinese influence in Hollywood, and Cruz's intentions are certainly sound. But the act, which Skopos Labs gives a 3 percent chance of being enacted, would be the equivalent of hunting ghosts. Would the U.S. government have the ability to pore through every iteration of every film script coming out of Hollywood for signs of appeasing China? Would it be politically or legally feasible to foist such an approach upon a closed-door system like the movie content creation industry? As aforementioned, the censorship process is subtle and implicit; rarely do the major studios take direct cues from the Communist Party. Indeed, many countries engage in film censorship and banning — Singapore, Egypt, even Australia to a lesser degree. China just has a large enough market that studios actually pay attention.



5G Warriors, 2020 (John Springs)

On the economy, the trade war has proven useful but not sufficient. As with the consumer backlash and most other things, the end of 2019 looked like a looming disaster for China, with its exports to the U.S. falling to one of the lowest levels in recent memory. By August, however, Chinese exports worldwide had rebounded to their third-highest level on record, and exports to the U.S. had increased to their highest level in over a year. According to the latest available data, the U.S. trade deficit with China stands at \$34 billion, the highest since November 2018. China's early reopening, combined with the fact that it manufactures a large proportion of the world's medical equipment, has allowed it to turn a healthy profit during the pandemic.

Even if the trade war had gone exactly according to plan, however, it is very unlikely that it would have been a viable long-term solution. The proportion of China's GDP constituted by exports halved since 2006, from 36 to 18 percent. Tariffs, if applied strategically, can protect certain American industries, but they cannot protect America's relative economic clout.

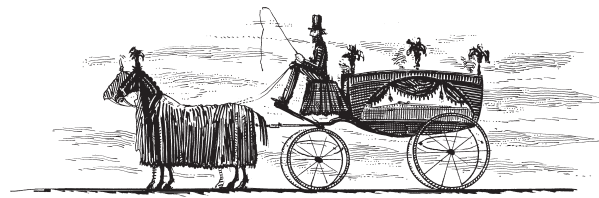
Other protectionist measures have also shown to be wanting. The Trump administration's campaign against Chinese technology giant Huawei, including banning it from using American components, has slowed but not prevented its growth. The company's latest move was the launch of the Mate 40 phone in late October, which Chinese retailing giant JD.com reported selling out in just eleven seconds.

Clearly, a new approach is needed on top of what is already being tried. Elected Democrats are unlikely to have answers — "China is going to eat our lunch? Come on, man," to quote Joe Biden. Some on the left do have a few ideas, though. Matthew Yglesias of Vox

made waves recently with his book *One Billion Americans*, which argues for a dramatic increase in the U.S. population through immigration and other initiatives with the express purpose of staying ahead of China. Yglesias is probably correct in thinking that letting in more immigrants will increase America's GDP. For conservatives who find even current immigration levels excessive, however, it goes without saying that such a proposal would seem implausible.

Others on the right, like David P. Goldman of the *Asia Times*, have called for what Goldman describes as a "Manhattan Project" to retake the initiative in technological innovation. It is not sufficient to prevent China from appropriating U.S. technology — the U.S. must accelerate its creation of new technologies or inevitably fall behind, he argues. This could be accomplished by adopting parts of the Chinese strategy, such as massive government investment in capital-intensive industries, an alternative to the Belt and Road initiative, and incentivizing Chinese scientists to work for the U.S. instead. Of course, such actions would be a substantial pivot away from the laissez-faire status quo and would represent a small concession to China's own strategy.

Regardless of what happens next, 2020 has left China with one Achilles' heel despite its advances elsewhere. Between its lies about the pandemic and its interference in the business of other countries, enmity toward China has risen in opinion polls to its highest levels on record. Economic clout has so far mitigated most of the effects of this hostility. Countries buy masks from Chinese factories because there are few other options, just as they install Huawei's 5G because it is half the price of its closest competitor. But make no mistake: China's clients in many industries would be glad to switch sides should a workable alternative present itself. That is America's opening for the decade to come. ✎



COVID and the Illusion of Control

Ordering the virus around doesn't work, makes fools of politicians, and harms all involved.

by Phil Kerpen

Human beings, and especially our politicians, have a need to feel in control. Tough-guy governors preen about their control measures: lockdowns, closures, hyper-testing, contact tracing, and arbitrary micromanagement of citizens' lives, families, and businesses. But the evidence that any of these measures have a meaningful effect on the coronavirus's rise and fall in a given area is extremely sparse, while the lockdown-caused pain, suffering, and death is layered on top of the far lesser harms of the virus. The most draconian control measures have often come after the virus is already in decline in an area, at the moment of maximum political pain. And judging from the pandemic response in Europe, our leaders may be ineducable, repeating the same mistakes in the fall that they made in the spring. That is what makes this year's fall and winter seasons uniquely dangerous.

SARS-CoV-2 is a serious viral pathogen for people who are very old or medically frail. It wreaks havoc in long-term care facilities — yet the places in the world with the highest death rates (Lombardy, Italy, the United Kingdom, New York, New Jersey, etc.) all implemented some version of deprioritizing residents of those facilities to keep hospital beds available for the general population.

For many people, however — and contrary to frequent misreporting — COVID is a relatively mild infection. For adults ages fifty to seventy, the CDC best estimate for the survival rate is 99.5 percent. From ages twenty to fifty, it is 99.98 percent, and

Phil Kerpen is president of American Commitment and the Committee to Unleash Prosperity.

for children and young adults under age twenty, according to the CDC, the survival rate is 99.997 percent — far less dangerous than seasonal influenza. Children rarely infect adults, and we now have several studies showing that exposure to young children actually reduces the risk of COVID death in adults, presumably because the many childhood bugs they carry help build up a strong immune system.

Yet most schools in the United States are closed — even while Europe keeps theirs open at heights of viral incidence never seen here. Many of the schools that are open are following bizarre part-time schedules to comply with arbitrary six-foot distancing guidelines, even though most public health experts believe part-time school poses more of a transmission risk than full-time because of the population mixing that occurs on the off days when children are not in consistent classrooms with consistent teachers. But our disrupted lives *feel* like action against COVID. They give us the illusion of control.

Workplaces and other adult settings are more challenging, because in any given population there will likely be people over age seventy, in medically at-risk categories, or those likely to transmit infections to people in those populations. We can advise people to stay home when sick, wash their hands, and keep their distance. We can and should do more to protect the vulnerable by concentrating our testing resources (why has FDA still not authorized instant home tests?) to minimize untested interactions between the young and the old or medically frail. But can we actually stop a respiratory virus that is widespread in the population?

Until this year, we knew the answer was no. The CDC's pre-pandemic planning guidance said, "the effectiveness of pandemic mitigation strategies will erode rapidly as the cumulative illness rate prior to implementation climbs above 1 percent of the population in an affected area."

The WHO as recently as November 2019 published pandemic influenza guidelines that listed "contact tracing, quarantine of exposed individuals, entry and exit screening, and border closure" as "not recommended in any circumstances."

Then China's communist regime — the world's most fervent believers in control — claimed their lockdown measures worked, and for some reason country after country proceeded to disregard a century of evidence and knowledge of infectious diseases to follow their lead.

But did lockdowns work, or was pre-2019 science right? In country after country during the severe initial spring wave, they were adopted right at the death peak, which came weeks after the infective peak.

Even a study in the left-wing British journal *The Lancet* found that "government actions such as border closures, full lockdowns, and a high rate of COVID-19 testing were not associated with statistically significant reductions in the number of critical cases or overall mortality."

We see regional patterns and seasonal patterns that human efforts are mostly unable to affect. Take Brazil, famously led by a

president who rejected lockdowns and encouraged violation of local lockdowns, and Peru, with the longest, harshest lockdown in the world, enforced by the military. Their cases and deaths rose in tandem, and ultimately it was Peru that reached higher disease burdens.

We see the same phenomenon in the United States. If there is any effect of lockdowns, it seems to be that the stricter ones correlate with higher, not lower, COVID mortality rates. Illinois, the land of lockdown, has at this writing a higher inpatient hospital census per capita than its mostly open neighbors Indiana, Iowa, and Wisconsin.

It is frightening to face a virus and admit there is little we can do to stop it. The illusion of control is seductive. But giving in to it is not cost-free. Lockdowns wreak economic, social, and public health havoc: suicides and drug overdoses, mass unemployment, and supply-chain disruption that cause global famine and sharply higher deaths from tuberculosis and other diseases. Children are losing opportunities for educational and social development that may take years to remedy — or may prove permanent.

The good news is that the virus is far less dangerous than originally thought, and even for the most at risk we have substantially improved treatment and knowledge, with vaccines close on the horizon as of this writing. The bad news is that, with even a normal seasonal rise in infections, politicians will be again tempted to do something, and that means ineffective and destructive lockdowns could be coming back. We need to stop them.

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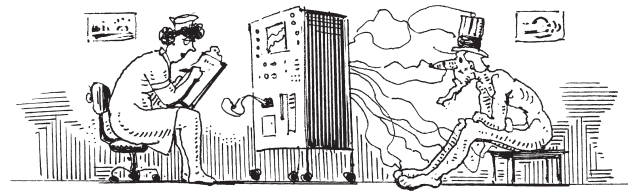
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Crashing the ‘Party of Science’

Political appeals to “following the science” fall apart when the data contradicts a preferred policy.

by Matt Shapiro

Science, not politics, must be the guide.” This was the proclamation made by California Gov. Gavin Newsom in April of this year. Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, this concept of science as the ultimate decision-maker is one that politicians have rhetorically embraced. Joe Biden declared, “I believe in science. Donald Trump doesn’t.”

This spring, Washington Gov. Jay Inslee proudly stated that his COVID-19 policies are a “war based on science” and “guided by science.” By July, however, the rhetoric of “listening to science” had been largely abandoned as Gov. Inslee announced that the state government was indefinitely suspending all transitions to reopening regardless of new case numbers. If it was science that was guiding these governors, it fell suspiciously quiet.

In theory, the rhetoric of “following the science” is meant to cut through the problems of political, social, and cultural disagreement over pandemic response measures. We all agree that we can’t trust lawyers who debate what the meaning of the word “is” is. Science stands in contrast to these squishy linguistic games. Science won’t argue about whether or not a bridge will stand up; it either does or does not. Science gave us the smallpox vaccine, high-yield wheat, and pasteurized milk. Science puts its foot down on the facts and doesn’t care if you disagree with it because it can reliably demonstrate the reality of a given situation.

This is the vision of science to which politicians appeal when they co-opt it into their platforms.

All the examples of science listed above represent applications of science that have been tested and retested millions of times. But,

Matt Shapiro is a data visualization expert and software engineer based in Seattle.

more importantly, they are all examples of a reality continuously reinforced. Bridges undergo inspections and repairs, vaccines are monitored for efficacy, improperly pasteurized milk is identified and recalled. When a result is different than expected, additional evidence causes functional realignments. These realignments are present even in mature applications of scientific thought with decades of evidence and practical application.

Against this idealized concept of scientific application, however, policy responses to COVID-19 are still in a stage of infancy. If we are to follow the science, we should hold all our knowledge loosely, aware that new discoveries will allow us to step back, reevaluate, and chart a new course.

That is not what has happened. The vision of scientific policy-making has been abandoned in favor of fear and political expediency. There is no better example of this than in the policies, rhetoric, and data surrounding in-person schooling.

When this crisis began, one of the earliest public policy actions was shutting down in-person schooling. Schools have been vectors for flu transmission in the past, and it was assumed in the early days of this pandemic that we should put in place the mitigation measures that the CDC has prepared for an extreme flu pandemic, which included closing schools. (Note: For the purposes of flu mitigation, “pandemic flu” is considered distinct from seasonal flu. Pandemic flu presumes a new and unanticipated flu strain with high lethality.)

In an environment of uncertainty and caution, closing schools was supposed to be a last-ditch strategy. The scientific literature on the efficacy of school closures on disease spread is decidedly mixed. When schools closed for a winter holiday during the 1918 flu pandemic, cases among pupils increased at a greater rate than when they were attending

classes. Epidemiologists are largely in agreement that school closures should be reserved for emergency measures and should not extend more than a few weeks at a time. This is what the science says.

Nevertheless, schools across the country closed for the remainder of the school year, and, as the summer wore on, the studies rolled in. Public Health England found only 198 COVID-19 cases among over a million students and staff and determined that over half of those cases came from infections within the home and not from school transmission. They found that student-to-student transmission was the single least likely form of COVID transmission of all the methods they tracked.

Within the United States, Professor Emily Oster spent an enormous amount of time and energy setting up independent tracking of COVID infections within schools. Her team is currently tracking almost three million students, half of whom are attending in-person classes. They’ve found that not only do schools typically have rates of COVID positivity lower than their surrounding communities, but in-person schooling also does not have any impact on raising those rates. In other words, students and staff seem to be at equal risk whether or not they are attending classes in person.

These are only two of many ongoing studies on COVID-19 and school transmission, but the results have been unambiguous. If policy-makers are to consider shutting things down in response to COVID-19 infection surges, schools should be last on the list.

Yet armed with this clear and reproducible data, the official position in California has been “we would like to open schools if possible,” while officials issue criteria for reopening that are unreachable. When cases started rising again in New York City, schools were quickly shut down while restaurants and bars remained open. In Washington state, King County school districts were begging the governor’s office and Department of Education for guidance and receiving stony silence.

What happened? How did the states that are most vocal about “listening to science” come to reject the conclusions and recommendations put forward by the best available data?

Their answer was that caution, not science, is driving the policy. There is worry that school openings would be a trigger point against

which people would assume the crisis was over. There is concern for the well-being of teachers and skepticism about the accuracy of the data. A strain of anxiety and caution runs through every conversation: Could we be certain that opening schools was safe? Was there any doubt at all that schools were a risk factor? If the smallest doubt could be entertained, then it was better to err on the side of caution.

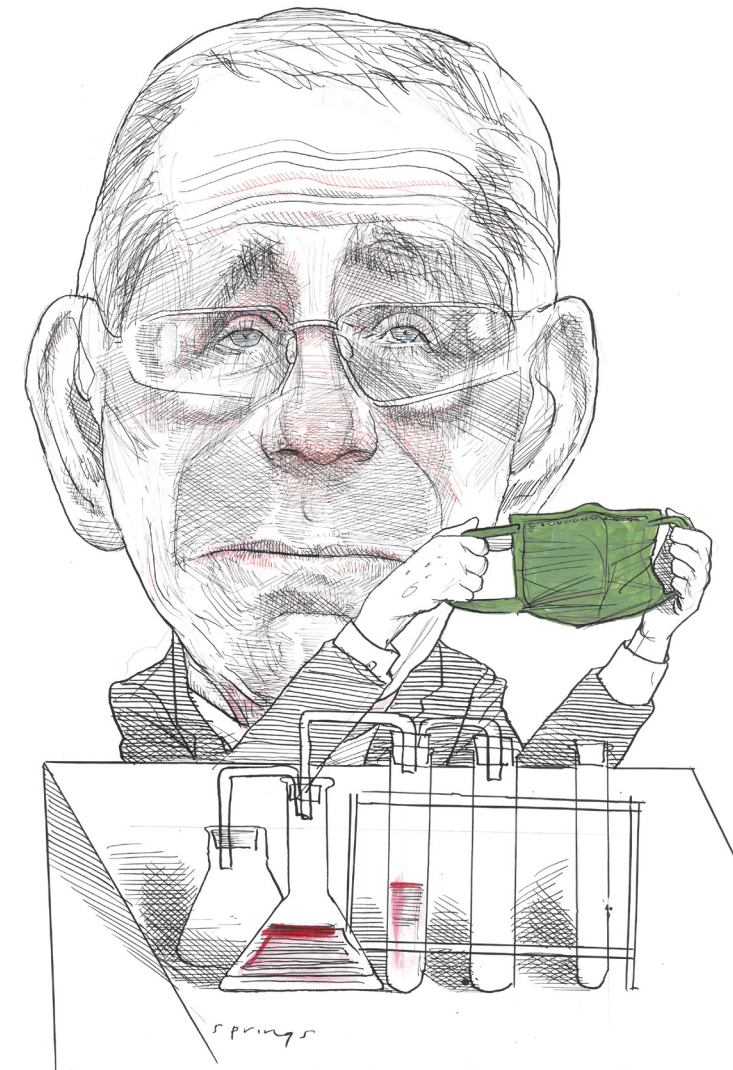
This is not to say that the other side of the policy debate is holding fast to scientific conclusions either. The policy preference for opening schools came before much of this data came to light, and there has certainly been resistance to closing certain high-risk businesses like bars even when the data shows high incidence of spread. But in

these states the core decision-making lever has been “get out of the way and let people make their own decisions.” This is a policy position that may use data as one of many points of consideration, but relies on a subjective leadership to balance easily measured things, like disease spread, against the things we cannot measure, like individual risk assessment and personal responsibility.

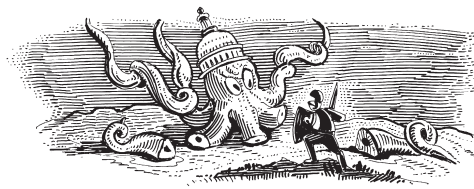
The states that are most vocal about “listening to science” imply that individual risk assessment will come to the wrong conclusions and that the appropriate levels of personal responsibility must be dictated by the state. The real point of “listening to science” was to say to voters that there is an evidence-based strategy of business and personal behavior that corresponds to a measured reality and that path must be accepted and enforced without apology. But in the case of schools, that is not what has happened, because that is not what politicians mean when they make this

appeal. Politicians don’t want to follow the science if it leads in a direction they did not intend. They want science as an external backstop to which they can appeal when they do what they always wanted to do anyway.

Some politicians want to appeal to caution over all things and believe that science can be safely ignored when the spirit of caution is preferred. For others, the appeal is to openness and freedom, and they chafe at the bit when the data implies that there are consequences to that freedom. Ultimately, there is no “party of science.” There is only politics.



Dr. Anthony Fauci, 2020 (John Springs)



How Republicans Can Keep Rebuilding the COVID Economy

Trump's tax cuts and deregulation are a great base to build on.

by Grover Norquist

Donald Trump and the Republican Congress brought the U.S. economy to life after Barack Obama gave us eight years of the weakest recovery since World War II. The partial shutdown of the economy driven by COVID fears reversed those gains, and yet by Election Day 2020, unemployment had fallen from a high of 14.7 percent to 6.9 percent, the stock market rebounded, and GDP growth exploded with a V-shaped recovery.

Republicans turned the economy around once, and then again. What will it take to keep us on pace to keep China and Europe in the rear-view mirror?

When President Trump was elected in November 2016, the S&P 500 jumped 5 percent before he even took office. Investors knew he planned to reduce business and individual taxes and that the threatened spending, taxes, and regulations of a Hillary Clinton presidency had evaporated.

The late 2017 tax bill brought the corporate tax rate from 35 percent — the highest in the world — to 21 percent, below China's 25 percent but above Ireland's 12.5 percent. The Trump tax cut also ended the U.S. policy of a worldwide corporate income tax that taxed profits of American companies when they brought their earnings back to the U.S. and after they had already paid taxes on those earnings in other nations, such as France or Japan. Several trillions of dollars in U.S. profits held in limbo overseas were made available for investment in the United States.

The lower corporate income tax drove stock prices up, and investment capital flowed to U.S. firms. Employers created new jobs, expanded operations, and increased wages, benefits, and bonuses. Walmart raised its starting wage to \$11. No minimum wage law required — rather real, sustainable growth.

Individual tax rates were reduced at every tax bracket. The per-child tax credit was doubled from \$1,000 to \$2,000 and extended from twenty-two million to thirty-three million American families. The median income family of four received a \$2,000 tax cut. The median income single parent with one child got a \$1,300 tax cut.

Repealing the Trump tax cut would gouge the American middle-class family.

With Trump, regulations were significantly reduced, and the Obama-Biden-Clinton plans for ever more regulatory costs were brought to a halt.

The good news after the 2020 election is that a likely Republican Senate means Biden cannot repeal or reduce the pro-growth value of the 2017 tax cuts. Some of those tax cuts were enacted for ten years, and some, like the corporate income tax rate reduction, were made permanent. That is the base of a strong pro-jobs, pro-investment environment upon which we can build.



Grover Norquist is president of Americans for Tax Reform.



For the next two years, a Republican Senate will likely stand between Biden and Pelosi and their ability to repeal the GOP tax cuts. Executive orders and regulations will dribble out, slowing growth and killing too many jobs. But in 2022, Pelosi's House, with its greatly reduced Democrat majority, will run for reelection with the millstone of their radical rantings and House legislation that never passed the Senate around their necks. As in 1994 in reaction to Clinton's leftward lunge and 2010's reaction to Obama, the Republicans will retake the House and strengthen their majority in the Senate.

Then, when Biden wants anything, the Republicans will have a wish list of pro-growth policies that they can demand for any spending plans Biden hopes to enact.

The following policies have wide support in the Republican caucus and would help us build on the GOP's and Trump's progress on tax reduction and deregulation:

End the taxation of inflation in capital gains. Today, Americans pay capital gains tax on the gain they earn when they sell a home, building, land, or stock. They pay tax on the real increase in value and the accumulated inflation. By executive order the president could rule that capital gains taxes would only be levied on the real, non-inflation gain of any sale.

End the double taxation of Americans who work abroad. We fixed the double taxation of American companies earning profits abroad. But individual Americans who work in, say, France pay both French income taxes and American income taxes. Only two countries do something that stupid: Eritrea and the United States. Ending this would make Americans working overseas more competitive.

Protect the three million students now in charter schools from the teachers' unions' demands that charter schools — free

of union control — be defunded. Republicans saved the Washington D.C. Opportunity Scholarships from Obama. They can save charter school students across the nation from Biden and the NEA.

Don't allow infrastructure spending without reforming the permitting process to reduce the time to build a new road or bridge. This would greatly reduce the cost of new construction.

Protect independent contractor laws from the demands of labor unions that everyone has to have a boss and be a target of unionization. Labor unions and Democrats enacted Assembly Bill 5, the California law banning ride-sharing and delivery drivers from being self-employed, independent contractors. Californians sent a shot across the bow of the Democrats and union bosses by scaling back that law through the initiative process on Election Day 2020.

End or restrict the Jones Act and the Davis-Bacon Act. The Jones Act increases

the cost of shipping goods between American ports, and the Davis-Bacon Act mandates union wages on any federally funded construction.

Rein in the runaway cost of entitlements with the Paul Ryan reform that blocks grants for all welfare programs to the states and limits their growth to the increase in wages (once we have a GOP House, Senate, and White House). This would have happened already, but we lost that Senate seat in Alabama, weakening the Senate majority.

Put a knife in the politics of envy and class hatred by expanding the investor class. Already there are more than one hundred million Americans with a 401(k) or IRA. Fifty-three percent of U.S. families have such an account, and they see that the strength of corporate after-tax earnings is highly correlated with the increase in their lifetime savings. One hundred million owners of IRAs or 401(k)s are a less appealing target than "the 1 percent." ❧

Repealing the Trump tax cut would gouge the American middle-class family.

Taxpayer Protection Pledge Signers

ATR welcomes the following Taxpayer Protection Pledge Signers to the 117th Congress. These signers have each made written commitments to taxpayers to oppose and vote against all income tax hikes. They stand as a strong firewall against the radical left.

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Biden Won't Follow Trump's Path to Middle East Peace

Trump's deals among Israel and others could have remade the Middle East map.

by Jed Babbin

It has been seven decades since the founding of Israel, more than a century since the downfall of the Ottoman Empire, and about fourteen hundred years since the death of Islam's Prophet Mohammed led to the split between Sunni and Shiite Muslims.

Thus, for more than a millennium, with brief interludes of peace, the Middle East has been torn apart by religious rivalries and competition among colonial empires. Those forces still operate today, but thanks to President Trump throwing out the “wisdom” of diplomats and “experts,” coupled with the threat Iran poses to the Sunni states, a historic realignment of the Middle East had begun. The question now is how quickly the election of Joe Biden will reverse Trump's accomplishments.

The Trump realignment, if it were to continue, would be more significant than the “Arab spring” or anything else that has happened in the region since Israel was created by United Nations mandate. Since then, Israel has had one ally — the United States — and an enormous number of enemies, ranging from the Arab nations and Iran to Russia, China, and many European nations.

Arab hostility to any Jewish presence in what had been the British Mandate of Palestine was not new. Jews had lived in Palestine since biblical times, before Islam existed. When Jews began arriving in great numbers after World War I, Arab riots against them in 1920 and 1929 took many lives.

It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the Arab opposition to any Jewish presence in what is now Israel was and is a religious one.

When Israeli independence was declared in 1948, five Arab nations immediately declared war on Israel, a conflict Israel barely won. The 1948 war didn't convince the Arab nations that Israel was there to stay, but their defeats in the 1967 and 1973 wars made that clear. Israel's wars in Lebanon, which continued from 1982 to 2006, were against Iran's puppet in Lebanon, the terrorist network Hizballah, and were stalemates.

Having failed to eradicate Israel, the Arab nations boycotted it, hoping to strangle it economically. That failed too, as did the 1973 Arab oil embargo on the United States.

Trump, who was constantly accused of bashing our allies and befriending our enemies, enjoyed creating disruptions. He disrupted the failed Middle East “peace process” by moving the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The “experts” assured us that move — along with Trump's attempted deal with the Palestinians — would enrage the Arabs and the Palestinians to a degree that peace would be impossible unless Trump's actions were



Columnist Jed Babbin served as a deputy undersecretary of defense in the administration of President George H. W. Bush. He is the best-selling author of five books, including *In the Words of Our Enemies* and *Inside the Asylum: Why the UN and Old Europe Are Worse Than You Think*.

undone. The “experts” were wrong. Trump proved the Palestinians irrelevant to Middle Eastern peace.

When Trump ordered the drone strike that killed Qassem Soleimani, Iran’s chief terrorist, many of those “experts” predicted open war with Iran. Again, the “experts” were wrong.

Despite the advice of the “experts,” Trump and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo brokered peace deals between Israel and the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

Trump’s engineering of the UAE and Bahrain deals with Israel was timed perfectly. Iran’s aggression toward the Arab nations has made those two nations admit what the rest of the Arab world is finally recognizing: that whatever theoretical danger Israel poses to Islamic dominance of the Middle East pales in comparison with the threat of Shiite Iran. And, at least with Trump in the White House, Israel’s security was too important for us to abandon.

The Arab nations have seen Iran’s proxies in Yemen, the Houthis, firing missiles at Saudi Arabia’s oil facilities. They aren’t fools: they understand the danger to them from Iran’s ballistic missiles, its terrorist networks, and its secret development of nuclear weapons. They are terrified of Iran, and rightly so.

The UAE and Bahrain could have proved to be the vanguard of a new Middle East in which Sunni states align themselves with both Israel and the United States to isolate Shiite Iran. For that reason, the Trump-engineered breakthrough in the Middle East should not be underestimated.

The rivalry between Arabs and Iranians is ethnic as well as religious. The majority of the world’s Muslims, about 1.6 billion people, are Arab, Pakistani, and African Sunnis. The majority of the Shiite population is in Iran, which is ethnically Persian and believes itself superior to Arabs. The Shiites are a small minority among the world’s Muslims. Both factions regard each other as religious apostates.

As a result of a big push by Trump and Pompeo, the UAE announced that it was ready to begin normal relations with Israel,

including trade, tourism, and, soon, full diplomatic relations with the Jewish state. The first regular airline flight from the UAE to Israel followed quickly.

Bahrain made the same peace accord and said it was ready to trade with Israel. Other Sunni nations such as Kuwait, Oman, and Sudan could follow.

The UAE–Bahrain breakthrough was condemned, of course, by the Palestinian “government” of Mahmoud Abbas. When the twenty-two nations that are members of the Arab League refused to condemn the normalization of relations between Israel and the UAE, the Abbas “government” declared that the Palestinians had been abandoned by their Arab brethren.

Abbas’s claim of abandonment is true but inconsequential. The Palestinians, since Israel’s founding, have made the destruction of the Jewish state their sole reason for being. The Arab nations have used the Palestinians as a political tool against Israel, which has availed them nothing. The UAE and Bahrain realignment proves, redundantly, that the Palestinians are irrelevant to peace in the Middle East.

It’s easy to see why both the UAE and Bahrain took this historic step. Both are tiny states on the Persian Gulf that have long relied on America to protect them from Iran. Bahrain is the headquarters of the U.S. Fifth Fleet, and there is a large U.S. Air Force presence in the UAE. There are about fifty thousand Americans living in the UAE.

In short, the example of those nations could lead other Arab nations in the region to normalize their relations with Israel. The big question is whether Saudi Arabia — in which many American troops and aviators are stationed — will join in the realignment.

It will be very difficult, but not impossible, for the Saudis to join. Their religion, Wahhabism, is a radical sect of Islam different from, but almost as radical as, Iran’s Shiism. Many members of the Saudi royal family have donated money to terrorist organizations.

But the Saudis are in as great a danger from Iran as any nation. They have been attacked regularly by Yemeni Shiites, the Houthis,

The Trump-engineered breakthrough in the Middle East should not be underestimated.

Trump was the most pro-Israel president we have ever had. But all he has accomplished will be quickly tossed aside by Biden.

Iran’s constant threats to close the Persian Gulf to shipping would cripple the Saudi economy. The Saudis’ great fear is that their eastern province, which has a majority Shiite population, would rebel at Iran’s urging. That hasn’t happened, at least yet, but the Saudi royal family is reportedly split on whether to join Trump’s coalition of Arab states. Biden’s election will cause the Saudis to reject a peace deal with Israel because, while he probably won’t be as anti-Israel as Obama was, Biden will be at best an unreliable ally of Israel.

The Saudi rulers, including Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, have to be realistic about the Iranian threat. Now that Biden has been elected president, that pressure will disappear, buried by Biden’s plan to rejoin the Obama nuclear deal with Iran.

Trump was the most pro-Israel president we have ever had. But all he has accomplished will be quickly tossed aside by Biden. Biden’s avowed intention to rejoin the 2015 Obama nuclear deal with Iran will weaken Israel and make it far less likely that other Arab nations will seek peace with the Jewish state.

It has been obvious from the outset that the Iran nuclear deal was highly dangerous because it provided no means of verifying that Iran was abiding by its obligations. Its inspection regime allows Iran to “self-inspect” nuclear sites it bans from inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), an instrumentality of the UN. Under a previous director, Egyptian Mohammed el-Baradei, the IAEA was, for a decade, a purblind watchdog and an apologist for Iran. Now, even the IAEA has reported that Iran is violating the Obama deal by having twelve times the amount of enriched uranium it is permitted under the agreement.

By rejoining the 2015 Obama deal, Biden will automatically end Trump’s “maximum pressure” campaign of economic sanctions against Iran. He will get nothing from Iran in return. The UN arms embargo against Iran ended in October. Nations such as Russia and

China will eagerly sell Iran new aircraft, ships, missiles, and radar systems. Iran will become even more dangerous than it is now.

Without unflinching U.S. support — which Biden will not give — Israel will be vastly weakened. It is still a regional power that has proved itself in three wars against the Arab nations. But Iran is an entirely different kind of enemy, much more dangerous than the Arab states. Once it obtains nuclear weapons — by developing them itself or by purchasing them from a nation such as Pakistan — it will be capable of destroying Israel in an afternoon.

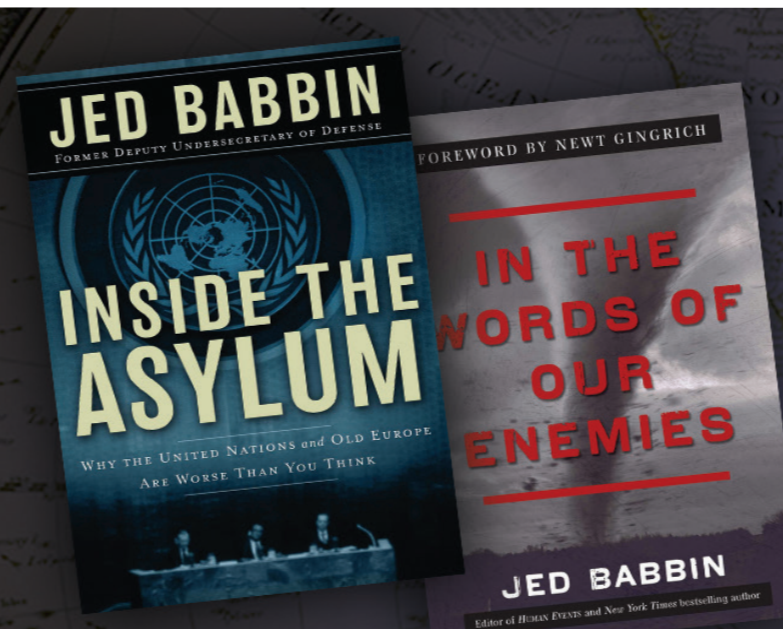
The Arab nations, too, will want nuclear weapons to protect themselves from Iran. Biden’s rejoining the Obama nuclear weapons deal with Iran will set off a nuclear weapons race in the Middle East.

Biden’s biggest foreign policy weakness comes from the fact that he is a multilateralist. He only favors U.S. action where our allies approve and join in the effort. His rejoining the Obama nuclear weapons deal with Iran will please nations such as the United

Kingdom, France, and Germany, which have been supportive of it throughout Trump’s presidency. Biden’s multilateralism will transform U.S. foreign and defense policy by providing our allies a veto on our actions on Iran, China, and Russia, among other adversaries. As former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was fond of saying, weakness is provocative.

Trump’s engineering of the peace deals between Israel and the UAE and Bahrain could have been the beginning of a new regional security alliance modeled after NATO. But Biden won’t put our strength behind such alliances, and so he dooms them to failure.

The stakes in the Middle East couldn’t be higher. Trump’s deals with the UAE and Bahrain provided a path to peace that hadn’t been attempted before. Biden’s intent to rejoin the Obama nuclear deal with Iran is a different path that will lead to war.



Foreign policy explained by someone who has lived it. JED BABBIN helps make sense of our current world and the future of global freedom.



Intern at *The American Spectator!*

Reporting, commentary, editorial, and development roles available.

Email Evan Maguire at maguiree@spectator.org.

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13

The Worst Governor in America

Gretchen Whitmer imposes insane policies on Michigan.

by Robert Stacy McCain

One word keeps recurring in online discussions of Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's latest orders to fight the state's raging COVID-19 outbreak: "insanity." Last week, the first-term Democrat issued an order extending the state's stay-at-home policy, which had been set to expire April 15, until May 1. Michigan has the third-highest number of coronavirus cases of any state in America, and certainly strong measures are required to get the pandemic under control. But the devil is in the details, and Whitmer's new order instantly provoked a firestorm of outrage.

Among the complaints was that Whitmer had prohibited sale of seeds and other garden supplies at a time when vegetable gardens need to be planted. Executive Order 2020-42 is titled, "Temporary requirement to suspend activities that are not necessary to sustain or protect life," and it is quite specific about which activities are and are "not necessary." Stores with "more than 50,000 square feet" (e.g., Walmart, Lowe's, Home Depot) are ordered to close areas of the store "by cordoning them off, placing signs in aisles, posting prominent signs, removing goods from shelves, or other appropriate means" that sell carpet or flooring, furniture, and "garden centers and plant nurseries." So if grandma went to Walmart for groceries and hoped to pick up some tomato plants or cucumber seeds while she was there — sorry, grandma! You could get a thousand-dollar fine and 90 days in jail for disobeying Whitmer's orders.

Posting photos from a Walmart in Grand Rapids showing the now-banned seeds cordoned off with yellow tape, one Twitter user declared, "@GovWhitmer

has banned us from growing our own food. This is [bleeping] insane." Another user posted a photo indicating that it's now apparently forbidden to sell American flags in Michigan. Barbecue grills, lawn chairs — anything in the garden section is now *streng verboten* in Michigan. References to Whitmer as a "dictator" proliferated on social media over the weekend as Michigan residents came to grips with the consequences of the governor's draconian order.

Whitmer imposed a strict prohibition on "not necessary" travel, which means that Michiganders are forbidden even to visit their own private vacation cabins in the "Up North" part of the state. This prohibition includes exceptions, however, that expose the arbitrary nature of Whitmer's policy. My friend Ray Patnaude remarked on Facebook, "If you live in Chicago you can visit your Michigan Lake house. If you live in Michigan, nope. Unless you drove to another state first and come back in. Insane."

Patnaude lives in St. Joseph County, on Michigan's southern border with Indiana. With a population of more than 60,000, the county has yet to record a single death from COVID-19, and 26 other counties in Michigan likewise have zero deaths from the Chinese virus. The state's pandemic is largely confined to metropolitan Detroit, with the city, surrounding Wayne County, and the suburbs of Oakland and Macomb counties accounting for 19,333 of known cases as of Sunday. That's about 78 percent of all coronavirus cases in Michigan. And the same jurisdictions had reported 1,250 deaths from COVID-19, which was 87 percent of the statewide total of 1,487 deaths. The rest of Michigan has been relatively unaffected by the disease,

but Whitmer's statewide order takes no account of regional differences.

Nor does the governor's detailed list of what is and is not "necessary" make any sense from a disease-prevention perspective. Why is the garden section closed at Walmart, and yet Michigan residents can still buy lottery tickets? Why, as one perplexed resident complained online, is her dentist's office closed, but abortion clinics are still open? The arbitrary and harmful nature of Executive Order 2020-42 was pointed out by state Rep. Lee Chatfield, speaker of Michigan's House of Representatives. On Twitter, Chatfield wrote,

The governor's extended Stay-at-Home order is the wrong call and is bad for Michigan families. We had a chance today to protect public health and take a positive step towards recovery. Unfortunately, rather than focus on what's safe, the governor decided again who is "essential."

People in our state are hurting. Family-owned businesses have been run to the ground & hundreds of thousands of people have lost their jobs because of it. Unemployment is skyrocketing & our government has not been there to answer the call. We deserve better! This is unacceptable.

Chatfield added that protecting public health and economic recovery are "not mutually exclusive," urging that "Instead of essential vs non-essential, we should think safe vs unsafe." This would seem reasonable, but Whitmer refused to heed the criticism. "Every single exception you make to a stay home, stay safe order makes this more porous and makes it less likely to work," Whitmer told Detroit's WDIV-TV. "It means more people are gonna get sick, more people are gonna die, and our

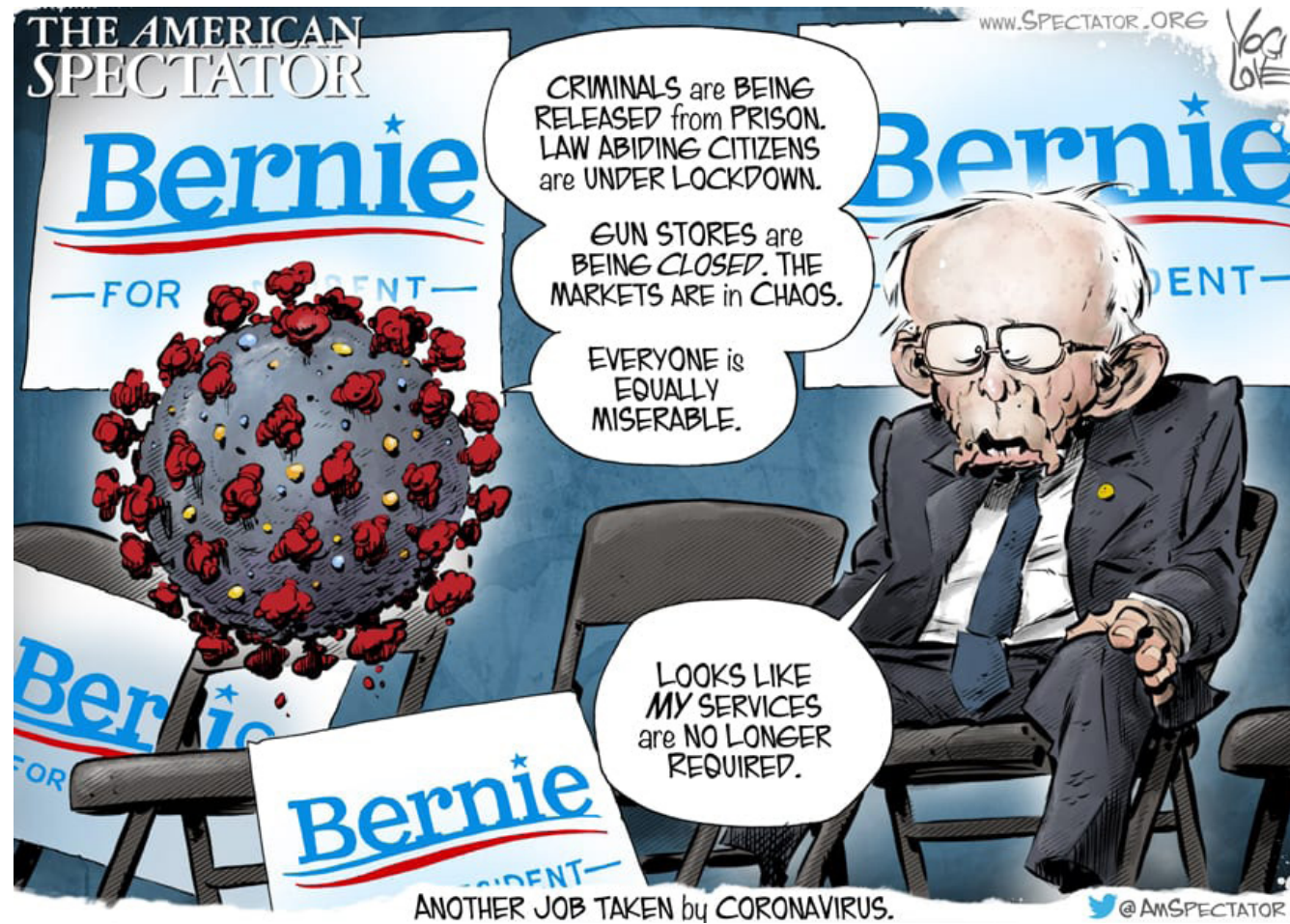
economy is going to suffer for longer.” There’s your headline: Selling garden supplies will kill people, governor declares.

“Insanity” — the word keeps cropping up in discussions of Whitmer’s reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic. Last month, the governor actually threatened the licenses of medical professionals who prescribed the anti-malarial drug hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) for coronavirus patients. A week later, however, Whitmer was trying to secure supplies of HCQ from the federal strategic stockpile. Erratic, arbitrary, deaf to criticism — she has thoroughly botched Michigan’s response to this crisis, and yet, despite her blatant failure, there is talk that

“Insanity” — the word keeps cropping up in discussions of Whitmer’s reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Whitmer is on the list of potential running mates for presumed Democratic nominee Joe Biden. Such a choice would almost certainly destroy whatever hope Democrats still have of winning Michigan in November. A petition to recall Whitmer had nearly 150,000 signatures Sunday, and a Facebook group, “Michiganders Against Excessive Quarantine,” signed up a quarter-million members in a matter of days.

If Democrats would consider naming such a lightning rod as Whitmer to their ticket, it just shows how badly Trump Derangement Syndrome has warped their judgment. Insanity is everywhere nowadays, and Michigan residents are cursed to be ruled by the Madwoman of Lansing.



‘Flattening the Curve,’ And Other Lies

A message to the disaster brokers who think they are our superiors.

by Scott McKay

To our betters in the American ruling class:

Just a note to say thanks for giving us a much-needed lesson in the wisdom of our Founding Fathers, who were not shy at all in admonishing us to be wary of surrendering the kind of government power you people have wielded, supposedly for our benefit, since the Chinese Communist virus hit our shores at some indeterminate point in the recent, or maybe not-so-recent, past.

You told us that Patient Zero in America for the Wuhan ChiCom virus came to Seattle and first landed in a hospital on January 19. You built an entire response to the virus based on that, and three months later more than 26 million Americans are out of work, and the projections are that some 24 percent of our economy will have evaporated in the second quarter of this year thanks to that response.

In the meantime we’ve watched, on our TVs and computer screens, as moms and dads have been arrested for taking their kids to the park, as some of you have issued edicts preventing us from traveling from one property we own to another, as some of you are attempting to mandate that we wear masks in public, and as some of you are shutting down events and gatherings even eight months from now, as though you have crystal balls to see what the future so far out will hold.

What you’ve done has made an abject mockery of the idea we have God-given, unassailable rights. Instead what we have are permissions from our political betters. Thomas Jefferson and Samuel Adams would be busy decorating trees with your hides for less than we’ve tolerated from you in the past three months.

And why? Because they knew what we’ve apparently forgotten — as another

of the titans of our past once said, “Those who would give up essential Liberty, to purchase a little temporary Safety, deserve neither Liberty nor Safety.”

Ben Franklin wouldn’t have a particularly fond judgment of what we’ve let you do lately.

Because what he knew, and what Jefferson and the rest knew, was that a government to which you surrender your natural rights will shortly abuse and debase them, and the power to whom it’s been ceded won’t easily be reclaimed by the people.

Some of us are beginning to remember this. More of us will recognize it as evidence of your perfidy and incompetence mounts.

After all, several things are true.

First, most of you spent several decades essentially rewarding Red China for the Tiananmen Square massacre by throwing open trade and granting the most murderous political apparatus in human history Most Favored Nation trade status. The result of that has been to help build a hostile world superpower rival we didn’t have after the fall of the Soviet Union, at the expense of our manufacturing base. You thought that was a good idea, partially because you’re naive and stupid and partially because you were bought off, but what we ended up with is a rogue regime that cooks up infectious diseases in laboratories, incompetently lets them out into the open, and proceeds to lie about them for months while the World Health Organization, which you put us on the hook to fund with hundreds of millions of dollars of our money, covers up for China despite their providing barely a tenth of what we do.

Great move.

Then, while you tell us this virus is nothing to worry about, you build a

response based on the numbers and data coming from that lying rogue regime and the incompetent government of Italy, which it turns out presides over a perfect storm of an atrocious socialized medicine regime and a teeming cesspool of sweatshop Chinese labor, coupled with an innovative method of counting every conceivable death related to the virus, whether actual or not, as a virus death. You throw all of that garbage into data models built and funded by apocalyptic leftists with extensive dealings with the Chinese, and proceed to govern by them.

It doesn’t occur to you until weeks later, when those models utterly fail to predict anything like the real impact of the virus, that what they reflect is garbage in, garbage out. And one main reason your models fail so completely is the public health bureaucrats you put all your faith in never even bothered to wonder what it would mean if the Chinese communists were lying to us about the virus.

Namely, that if they denied its existence for two months, the virus was probably everywhere long before your response kicked in, and shutting down the American economy was a tragic waste of lives, livelihoods, and capital. We now know this was the case, because at long last somebody is finally doing antibody testing — and as they conduct studies in places like California, where the virus would have spread earliest, they’re finding out what was obvious to lots of people. It turns out Patient Zero wasn’t Zero at all — at least two people had died of the virus well before the “outbreak” supposedly started.

What that means is we were a lot further along this curve you told us putting us under house arrest was going to flatten than you knew. And because we were further along that curve, the

potential impact of the virus on our health-care system was never even remotely close to what your awful data models said it would be.

That's OK, though. Lives are more important than money, right? Except you've spent decades pushing government programs aimed at redistributing wealth on us based on the premise, which we've been promised is true (and might well be), that poverty, unemployment, and social isolation create catastrophic health outcomes. So making the whole country broke, unemployed, and unable to interact in person with their friends is now a good idea ... because of this virus?

How dangerous is the virus? Well, it could kill more than two million of us, and everybody is at risk. Or maybe more like 250,000 of us, most of whom are old. Or, perhaps it's more like 100,000 of us, and the vast majority have serious health issues like morbid obesity, hypertension, diabetes, or are immunocompromised. Or maybe it's 60,000.

Which is a number more like a bad flu season. But we don't dare call this the flu! It's 10 times more dangerous than the flu.

Well, not unless you're over 60 and have those comorbidities. If you're 45 or younger and you're healthy, the flu is probably more likely to kill you than the Chinese coronavirus.

And then those studies come out and — guess what! — this virus has about the same fatality rate, once you project all the people who've actually had it, as the flu. Wonder what the numbers would have looked like if you hadn't copied the Italians' model of chalking up everybody who even thought of having the virus as a virus death. Sometimes you're not even testing people before assigning their deaths to the virus. Hey, running up the score is good for getting federal disaster funding, right? Better make sure the public stays scared!

But the medical system was going to be overwhelmed, and so we had to “flatten the curve” and keep everybody home and socially distanced. Because that would keep us from getting the virus. Or actually, no, it wouldn't, because everybody ultimately gets the virus. We just needed to make sure we didn't all get it at the same time, because the hospitals would fill up.

And it's a good thing we shut the economy down, because the hospitals didn't fill up. In fact, the hospitals are empty, and they're laying off doctors and

nurses. Y'know, the doctors and nurses who are such heroes that nobody is supposed to get mad when they harangue people who question whether or not this is as serious as they make it out to be on the six o'clock news. Those doctors and nurses — they're swamped with patients, you know. When they're not laid off because there are no patients to see.

The “new normal” means we can go back to work when you tell us, and we can live our lives how you dictate we can.

By the way, thanks for designing such a precise, well-thought-out shutdown. After all, it makes perfect sense that you can get an abortion but not a colonoscopy. No need to explain why Walmart is selling shirts while Macy's is shuttered. Or why surfing or golfing alone are prohibited, because “social distancing,” but buying lottery tickets is cool. Or why you can't get a haircut unless you're a mayor or governor who “has” to go on TV to preen at a press conference daily. Or why buying booze is OK but going to the gym is dangerous. That has all made perfect sense. Good job on thinking all that through.

Just imagine how bad it would have been if you hadn't shut the economy down. Look at what those data models showed! You guys are real heroes. We shouldn't be upset at all about losing our jobs. We should be thanking you for free government swag and unemployment checks ... which in some cases are more than our jobs were paying, and so those businesses you shuttered can't reopen because they can't bring back their employees who have no motivation to get back to work.

But now that you saved the health-care system from being overloaded (not from being shut down like all the other businesses, though, which means you've damaged it in other ways with stupid public policy), it's time to go back to work, right? Well, no.

No, you tell us, you have to be careful about how you do that. Too much freedom is a bad thing, right? We have to embrace the “new normal.”

The “new normal” means we can go back to work when you tell us, and we can live our lives how you dictate we can. And why?

Because we don't want a “second wave” of the outbreak.

Wait, why would we have a second wave? Because not everybody got the virus in the first wave. And until everybody has more or less had it you can't get to “herd immunity,” which is how these viruses are defeated.

But the virus ultimately spreads everywhere. We know this because there have been viruses spreading since there have been people for them to spread to, and that's how a coronavirus works.

So why wouldn't we want to just get this over with and protect the people most vulnerable to the virus? Because that would be irresponsible, right? You have to — how does it go? — “test, trace, isolate” before you can let people do what they want. You might even need to give people “immunity papers” proving they're safe to be around before you'll let them go to work at their “non-essential” jobs or eat at a restaurant.

We promise we won't notice none of that was in the initial justification for forcing us to stay home. We wouldn't suspect you guys of bad faith for having bait-and-switched us like that. Because we know that if we did notice, and we did express dissatisfaction, we would be descended upon by our betters at the Big Tech companies, who are doing us a big favor by censoring “misinformation” about the virus like for example people questioning the WHO or noting the virus likely came out of a Chinese bioweapons lab. Or we'll get arrested because protesting is “non-essential.” Or maybe we'll just be griped at by the hordes of busybody Karens across the country who call us “selfish” for wondering whether this wasn't all just a too-costly overreaction.

No, we won't do any of that. We'll just say thanks, and that you're really doing a hell of a job.

Seriously. Literally. You're doing a hell of a job.

Signed,

The irritated, unwashed, and involuntarily broke American people. ✎

A Time to Hate

It's not too late.

by **Dov Fischer**

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

A time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to guard, and a time to cast away;

A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

A time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.

— *Kobelet (Ecclesiastes) 3:1-8*

Through eight years, I accepted the rules of the game. Obama was president. He won fair and square because the Republicans serially put up two milquetoast opponents who were incapable of offering a vision or articulating a message that inspired. John McCain had been an American wartime hero who stood by his men, refused early release, and withstood torture in the “Hanoi Hilton” 40 years earlier. But he had no business running for a presidency two generations later for which he was not prepared to fight and for which he had no vision. And then came Mitt Romney, his etch-a-sketch candidacy, his binders full of women, and his Romneycare, which served as the model for the Obamacare and which was the single most galvanizing issue in 2012 for Republican conservatives. In order to throw out Obamacare, the Republican Party offered us conservatives ... what, *Romneycare?* Tough for us conservatives to sing in that tabernacle choir.

I accepted Obama. I never articulated his first name, and I never called him “president,” but I accepted the results and accepted that this Pretender was our country's lawfully elected chief executive. I watched his arrogance, the unctuous way he carried himself literally with his nose up, the way he never held a railing while walking a stairway because he was too cool, the kinds of human dreck he

regularly invited as his White House guests, and I accepted it all with the soft whisper, “This, too, shall pass.” I watched the Corrupt Journalist Corps idolize him, crown him a king, admire him as a messiah and a deity, and I accepted the milieu. This, too, in time would pass. It meant living through eight years of the deepest public corruption. Lois Lerner stealing an election by leveraging the awesome power of the Internal Revenue Service to close down legitimate conservative political groups. Eric Holder — the nobleman who urged people to kick enemies — bringing lawlessness and corruption into the Justice Department, even approving the “Fast and Furious” idea of releasing lethal weapons to Mexican drug lords in the cockamamie scheme to find out how they access and move their weapons. Glenn Beck exposed Obama's Maoist communications director, Anita Dunn, who walked children through the White House. There was ACORN. Just one corruption after another.

Amid my speeches and writings throughout the Wasted Obama Decade, I never published a piece aimed at bringing down Obama before his term was up. He won. Although he is despicable beyond words, the rules of our game, as set forth in our precious Constitution, made him our president. That meant Americans would die needlessly because we had a commander in chief who was

a Pretender and an Incompetent. But he won fair and square. So ISIS grew from a small terror band to a caliphate. ISIS-inspired terror attacks occurred in our homeland. Western Europe sustained terrible deadly attacks. Our American economy went nowhere. We micturated half a billion dollars down a toilet with Solyndra while trying to close down our energy sector, attacking the genius of our hydraulic fracturing, obstructing our oil exploration, blocking the construction of new pipelines that offered even more oil and more thousands of jobs. Instead, we got shovel-ready jobs that were not ready but rather were chummy payoffs to union heads and other political insiders. We got windmills suitable for blowhards. We got Hillary Clinton as Secretary of State and Benghazi as testimonial to her vision. We got Susan Rice, an idiot, raised paradoxically to head of national security after spending a day lying on five television stations about Benghazi and later going on to describe Bowe Bergdahl, a coward and deserter, as a hero who had served with honor and distinction. We got Loretta Lynch, who some thought would clean up Holder's corruption of Justice, only to find that she ended up in bed with the Clintons at the height of the probe of Hillary's corruption. We saw the world's worst murderers freed from Gitmo so that they could rejoin the war against America.

And yet I accepted it all. Because if there are only two main parties in this country, and if the Republican RINOs refuse repeatedly to nominate a bona fide conservative who truly reflects the will of the rank-and-file voters whose ballots send them to Washington, then we are left with a Pretender like Obama, and he won fair and square.

The waters did not stop rising on Obama's watch. The Earth was not healed. On his watch, a country that finally had healed itself from the shame and scourge of imposing slavery on human beings more than a century earlier, a country that had atoned and that had created and institutionalized a new social infrastructure by which people no longer were denied because of their skin color or religion — a country that reflected that healing by electing a Black man president despite his manifest lack of personal achievement, close ties with an organized-crime felon, and questionable biography — suddenly erupted into a new era of racial bitterness. Michael Brown and Ferguson aflame amid the “Hands Up, Don't Shoot” lie promoted by Obama and by Eric Holder but shot down by a Missouri grand jury. Freddie Gray and Baltimore aflame followed by a series of outright judicial exonerations handed down by a Black judge who saw that every accused cop had acted properly and lawfully. A lowlife killed by George Zimmerman in Sanford, Florida, a thug whom Obama told us would have been the likes of his own son if he had had a son. Eight years of racial divide, social division aimed at tearing us up as a color-blind and religion-blind American People, just to promote electoral successes.

And yet I accepted that Obama had won. No derangement syndrome for me. It was what it was. As a New York Mets fan from their founding in 1962, I understood what it was to wait patiently and to endure eight years of unmitigated disaster. As a boy, I waited then, and then came Tom Seaver, Jerry Koosman, and Nolan Ryan. As an adult I waited. And then came Donald Trump and Mike Pence.

When the Mets finally took it all in 1969, the other teams accepted the results. They lost gracefully. Now it was the Mets' turn, and they had won it fair and square. But these past three years have been something different. Trump and Pence won fair and square. But there was no grace. Rather, there was instant character assassination, instant war, instant denial. Advertisements urging

electors to violate their Electoral College oaths. Fabrications of collusion with Putin. Investigations that hamstrung a presidency. Lies and innuendoes leaked and published by the unindicted co-conspirators we call the “mainstream media.” A never-ending hunt to find scandals and Trump accusers: a bimbo who pole-danced at bars, her lawyer who now dances behind bars, another crooked lawyer who tape-recorded his own clients and now is locked up, disbarred

Eight years of racial divide, social division aimed at tearing us up as a color-blind and religion-blind American People, just to promote electoral successes.

from the Bar. One cartoon character after another.

As a rabbi of 40 years and a person who believes that most people have the potential for goodness, and who tries to find the good even in people who disappoint until they absolutely close off the possibility of goodness being discovered within them, I now have learned to hate.

The Bible certainly does not encourage hate. “Do not hate your brother in your heart. [If he does wrong, go ahead and] Rebuke your compatriot, but do not sin because of him” (Leviticus 19:17). “Do not seek revenge, and do not bear a grudge against the children of your people. And you shall love your neighbor as you love yourself” (Leviticus 19:18). But the Bible acknowledges the existence of viciousness and cruelty, and it demands of decent people that we not sit on the fence in the face of evil: “Those who love G-d hate evil” (Psalm 97:10). King Solomon laid it out best in that magnificently poetic third chapter of Ecclesiastes, which inspired not only The Byrds but even Pete Seeger and Judy Collins.

Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice, and moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue. There is a time to hate.

I have come deeply to hate. I hate that Donald Trump never was given a chance to be president of the United States for even one day's honeymoon. I hate that, long before he won the presidency — fair and square — corrupt crooks and criminals in the United States Department of Justice, its Federal Bureau of Investigation, were actively plotting to take him down. I hate that there are so few outlets in the media that give voice to condemn the criminality and corruption that broke every accepted societal norm by which we play the game. I hate that Obama was in on it, yet continues to pontificate on what is just and on what threatens freedom.

I hate that they all keep getting away with it. Every single one of them gets away with it. There is absolutely no price to be paid on the left for perjury, for conspiracy to overturn a legitimate election, for treason.

Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn may or may not be a great American hero. Yes, he has the medals and the military career for which we all say, “Thank you for your service.” But so did John McCain, and so does that Vindman guy. OK, so thank you for your service. Absolutely. But Michael Flynn, whether a hero or simply, merely just a lifelong patriot who has devoted his entire adult life to the protection and betterment of the United States, wanted to serve his country. So he served honorably in the military under Obama as commander in chief. He accepted the chain of command. And then, after his active military service, he stepped forward to participate politically under Trump.

Lt. Gen. Flynn never deserved what was done to him. He was targeted for destruction by criminals and crooks in the FBI. They set out to destroy him. The FBI is not allowed to bother law-abiding people like you and me, to set us up, and to induce us to commit a crime. They are permitted to pursue criminal investigations only when they have a predicate before them. In the case of Flynn, they had in their possession a complete recording and transcript of his phone call with Sergey Kislyak. Yet they interviewed him and asked him to tell them what was said during the call. The Bureau of Investigation was not investigating; they already knew the answer. Rather, they were setting him up to speak a falsehood, to commit the crime of lying to the FBI, an act whose criminal dimensions he did not appreciate as a layman. They dissuaded him from having an attorney at the interview so he would slip into the trap. A competent attorney would have protected him. Frankly, a competent attorney would

have killed the interview in the first place or would have wrangled terms that would have negated its purpose, much as Hillary did.

For each question, even if such an interview ever would have happened, an attorney like me would have been saying, alternating between my client and his interrogator: “Lieutenant General, you do not have to answer that question. Go ahead, what's the next question?” Or “Lieutenant General, please wait a moment. What is the purpose of this question? What exactly are you asking?” Or “My client, the Lieutenant General, is delighted he could give you eight minutes of his valuable time today. If you want to ask him any more questions along these lines, send us a subpoena. We will study it and let you know our thoughts.”

They took advantage of a good man who suddenly found himself combating in a different kind of military theater outside his field of expertise. He knew the jungles of Afghanistan, not the jungles of the Justice Department in Washington. The slime dregs of Justice, the Peter Strzoks and Andrew McCabes of the FBI, knew this. They had the lieutenant general on their terrain. He never should have been questioned about the call. He never should have been sucked into an interview without an attorney present. He never should have been lulled into what he said to the FBI.

Donald Trump has been the chief executive of this country for more than three years, and he has proven to be a great president in so many ways, but he sadly has proven incapable of cleaning the Swamp. He at least identified the Swamp's existence, and he is fighting its effort to swallow him within its muck. But he has proven that, despite the glorious slogan he inspired, he cannot drain it. Not one single slime in the Swamp has been brought to justice.

There is something so evil in a society that tolerates a dual standard of justice, dual standards of everything. On the one hand, we political conservatives harbor profoundly deep feelings, but we do not destroy people's lives based on abstract politics. Yes, we oppose them and expose them, and we hope that contemporary

society and history judge them for the evil they represent. But we do not destroy them in their lives. They get away with *everything*. Hillary Clinton spoliated 33,000 emails amid a federal probe, a federal crime that always ends up with prison time — but not for her. It is a federal crime to lie under

I have come deeply to hate. I hate that Donald Trump never was given a chance to be president of the United States for even one day's honeymoon.

oath to Congress. Comey, Clapper, Brennan — how have they all avoided prison time? Strzok, Page, the whole bunch of them? Adam Schiff. The outliers on the Mueller team. Not one single slime among them in the Swamp has been brought to justice.

These animals destroyed the life of Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn. They drove him into such financial ruin that he had to sell his home to pay his legal bills. They went after a good boy, Nick Sandmann, and they cruelly made him into the face of racism. His own Catholic diocese in eastern Kentucky sold him out and sold out all the boys who stood with him that fateful day in Washington, D.C., when he was harassed by a messed-up Indian with a drum. And they did everything they could to destroy Brett Kavanaugh, a good man, a family man, a man who has devoted time throughout his life to his church and to the needy. They endeavored through outright perjury to destroy him. *The perjurers all got away with it.* Name *one single perjurer* against Justice Kavanaugh who ever was brought to justice by Charles Grassley or Lindsey Graham of the Senate Judicial Committee.



The liars destroy with impunity because they know they *always* will get away with it. Republicans watch the character assassination and then go on Sean Hannity to sound brave for five minutes. “These people will pay a steep price, Sean.” “I won't let them get away with it, Sean.” “Let not your heart be troubled, Sean.” “We will investigate every crime and every perjury, Sean.” Three years of hearing this from Paul Ryan, Reince Priebus, Trey Gowdy, Charles Grassley, Lindsey Graham, Rudy Giuliani, Jason Chaffetz, Kevin McCarthy. Well, *Fox News Alert*: They all got away with it. Comey. Brennan. Clapper. Blasey Ford. Schiff. Hillary. Strzok. Page. McCabe.

If the Left truly believed in the truth of the slogans they chanted in their failed effort to destroy Justice Kavanaugh, does anyone truly believe that Biden still would be standing today? Does anyone truly believe that Sonia Sotomayor could not have been completely destroyed at the time of her SCOTUS nomination if she were conservative? If the media were not a division of the Democrat Party, does anyone doubt that New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo today would have been forced from office like his immediate predecessors, Eliot Spitzer and David Paterson, if only for presiding over so extraordinary a health catastrophe that his one state accounts for half the coronavirus illnesses and deaths in the whole country? Cuomo ordered nursing homes in his state to admit coronavirus-infected seniors into facilities that were woefully unprepared to handle the medical ramifications, and that order singularly caused mass death. And yet the same media that seek any and every angle to blame Trump for not wearing a mask lionize Cuomo, who not only should wear a mask but also should change his fingerprints, undergo plastic surgery to reconfigure his appearance, and hide for dear life in some El Chapo cave from the children and grandchildren left behind by the more than 5,000 defenseless seniors whom he has martyred so far on the altar of Democrat liberalism.

There is a time to love and a time to hate. This is a time to hate. 🦃

The Statues They Left Standing

They do no honor to the America we celebrate this July 4th.

by Daniel J. Flynn

The monuments the vandals leave standing shine as bright a light on their benightedness as the ones they topple.

Several weeks back a San Francisco mob removed statues of Union General Ulysses S. Grant, California founding father St. Junipero Serra, and “Star Spangled Banner” lyricist Francis Scott Key but left the signs for Carlton B. Goodlett Place, the street that gives the iconic San Francisco city hall its address, untouched and intact.

Goodlett acted as the personal physician for mass murderer Jim Jones and printed the *Peoples Temple* newspaper. He proclaimed that Jonestown “gives people hope,” shows that “dreams come true,” and represents “the wave of the future” upon visiting the jungle concentration camp in Guyana just months before the mass poisoning that killed more than 900. Larry Schacht, the mixologist behind the murderous elixir, gained admittance into a Mexican medical school with the help of Dr. Goodlett, who likened him to Nobel Peace Prize-winner Albert Schweitzer, after U.S. schools turned him down.

As detailed in my book *Cult City: Jim Jones, Harvey Milk, and 10 Days That Shook San Francisco*, even after the carnage, Goodlett, ever the flunky, ran interference for Jim Jones, “a man who really attempted to practice the dogmas of Christianity.” Two days after what stood until 9/11 as the largest loss of American civilian life in U.S. history, Goodlett, in a jaw-dropping display on public television, bitterly criticized the congressman who saved lives prior to Jones’s “Red Brigades” assassinating him, the journalists who dared investigate the communist cult leader, and the relatives who labored in vain to rescue

their loved ones. He praised Jim Jones repeatedly. “From my point of view,” he maintained, “the good works of a man as well as his rascality — they are not interred with his bones.”

The blindfold so many local leaders wore when giving awards and public posts to Jim Jones remains fastened today as San Franciscans celebrate the cult leader’s sycophants who celebrated him.

Willie Brown, who compared the “highly trusted brother in the struggle for liberation” Jim Jones to Albert Einstein and Martin Luther King Jr., sees his name on the span of the Bay Bridge that connects San Francisco to Yerba Buena Island. George Moscone, the assassinated mayor who placed Jones on the city’s housing commission, effectively making him the largest landlord in San Francisco once he became chairman, and made his benefactor off-limits to serious investigation, lends his name to the city’s convention center, a school, and a park. San Francisco put Harvey Milk’s name on Terminal 1 of its airport. “Rev. Jones is widely known in the minority communities here and elsewhere as a man of the highest character, who has undertaken constructive remedies for social problems which have been amazing in their scope and effectiveness,” Milk wrote to President Jimmy Carter in a successful effort to prevent the State Department from retrieving a boy kidnapped by Jones. The State Department hindered but did not help the boy’s parents — depicted as a liar and a blackmailer by Milk — retrieve their six-year-old son, whose body rotted with the rest.

Such thumbnail sketches do not do justice to their injustice. But the purity police in a one-party town do not brook any criticism, even of a thumbnail-sketch variety, of the progressives who boosted a lunatic who killed more

African Americans than any member of the Ku Klux Klan.

Everywhere they topple statues of great men, they erect monuments for losers.

In Massachusetts, where a mob decapitated a statue of Christopher Columbus and the Boston Arts Commission voted to taliban a bronze of Abraham Lincoln, the tallest library in the Western Hemisphere memorializes a figure who renounced his American citizenship, eulogized Stalin as a “great” and “courageous” man, and earned ejection from the NAACP for espousing racial separatism. W. E. B. Du Bois toured Nazi Germany in 1936 as an unwitting tool of Adolf Hitler’s regime. He praised the Third Reich in glowing terms, compared it favorably to the United States in regards to prejudice, and wrote a shameful article called “The German Case Against Jews” that explained the “reasoned prejudice” against the group that he claimed controlled the stock exchange, business, the legal field, and so on. Maoist China celebrated a holiday in Du Bois’s honor. The Soviet Union awarded him the Lenin Peace Prize. Why does the University of Massachusetts put his name on its library?

New Yorkers elected Samuel Dickstein to represent them in Congress. Instead, he represented Moscow, which, knowing him better, codenamed him “Crook.” Dickstein ironically created the House Committee on Un-American Activities, which he used to tar patriots, such as Smedley Butler, one of a few to win the Congressional Medal of Honor twice, but condemned it once it investigated Stalinists. While Mayor Bill de Blasio calls a statue of Theodore Roosevelt on the Upper West Side “problematic,” he lets stand a city memorial on the Lower East Side — “Samuel Dickstein Plaza” — for a paid agent of the Kremlin who defrauded our democracy.

Boston’s Old South Meeting House features a statue of a muzzled Margaret Sanger, who spoke unmuzzled in 1912 when she described “the Aboriginal Australian” as the “lowest known species of the human family, just a step higher than the chimpanzee in brain development” in *The New York Call*, unmuzzled in 1923 when she singled out Jews and Italians for “the multiplication of the unfit in this country” before a committee of the New York state assembly, unmuzzled speaking to a Ku Klux Klan meeting in New Jersey in 1926, and unmuzzled in *The Birth Control Review* in 1932 when she issued a plan to forcibly sterilize and imprison for life in concentration camps millions of “dysgenic” Americans.

People who see racism everywhere fail to see it in themselves. They imagine their ideology gives them, and their heroes, a pass just as they believe that anyone opposing their beliefs ipso facto harbors great bigotry. Self-righteousness breeds self-flattery.

The contempt of villains for heroes travels beyond our borders. To desecrate and deface the likenesses of Spanish heroes (Miguel de Cervantes), Indian heroes (Mahatma Gandhi), English heroes (Winston Churchill), and so on means to exhibit profound intolerance and not to demand tolerance. They imagine their

acts of vandalism as enlightened and their desecration of what others revere as culturally sensitive. Would they characterize it as charitably if a mob destroyed the monuments to their heroes? Would they call it peaceful protest rather than incitement? Would they like the people ripping down their heroes more or would they recognize that this scab-picking leads to rawness rather than reconciliation?

The American heroes knocked from their pedestals discovered continents, founded states, and won wars. Those taking their place share a single criterion: ideology. Anyone can believe fervently. Few actually do something monumental, which explains why societies erect monuments to them.

The shift toward honoring ideologues who affirm the homogenous beliefs of the parochial cosmopolitans who live in America’s one-party urban enclaves strikes as political narcissism. Are they honoring others or themselves?

Nothing threatens great as much as mediocre. The ideologue looking down from below at the man on the pedestal wishes to tear down the reminder to his mediocrity (or worse). Rather than measure himself against Christopher Columbus or George Washington, he tears down the taunt to his inferiority.

In its place, he erects a mirror — an ideologue who merely believed the things he believes. When we honor the best, we bring out the worst in the worst.

The more extreme the inhabitants of America’s political monoliths — people unaccustomed to a challenge to their views and mistaking their ideology for morality — the more they fervently tear down statues of saints and abolitionists and liberators. Nothing strikes as so backward as a progressive acting like a barbarian. The vandals of art and history cannot tolerate even slight deviations from progressive orthodoxy circa 2020. Ironically, so much that falls represents progress for some earlier era. And, given the inherently shifting meaning of progressivism, the statues that take their place eventually capsize, too. A progressive litmus test on statuary guarantees perpetual statuary murder. What goes up must come down.

They ripped down statues of patriots who built, and bled for, America. The memorials they left standing celebrated people who renounced citizenship, betrayed country for profit, outlined detailed plans for concentration camps, and fawned over mass murderers.

They are narrow. They are bigots. They aren’t patriots.

Happy Fourth of July? 🐔



The Dangerous Passivity of the Intellectual Right

And why they need to start fighting the war of ideas again.

by Richard Shinder

It is sufficiently obvious as to not require detailed explanation that in the modern era, movements for change require intellectuals, activists, and foot soldiers at scale in order to gain traction in the public square, much less achieve some measure of the outcomes sought.

So why is it that in a so-called “50/50” nation, the activist Left in its various forms and combinations — the Women’s March, the Resistance™, Black Lives Matter, et. al. — can rally tens of thousands to the streets at the drop of a hat, while similar movements of the Right — with the notable sectarian exceptions of the March for Life and the odd gun rights rally here and there — command no such passion and obeisance? How is it that those promoting leftist causes better sustain organizational vigor despite frequently advocating for execrable objectives (such as defunding the police) utterly bereft of intellectual rigor, evidentiary support, or logical consistency, while their counterparts on the right do little more than to speak hopefully of “silent majorities” who are only ever heard from in voting booths, if at all?

Put differently, why do the winning ideals of the classically liberal right — and by winning, I mean those values that contributed to creating the wealthiest, most just society the world has ever known, and which faced down the twin collectivist evils of fascism and communism in a single 50-year period — not inspire the masses to the same degree of those failed, faded pennants carried aloft by the Left?

Classical liberalism — which for these purposes is a term that can be used interchangeably with “conservatism” or “the Right” — prevailed in history through the force of its ideas and the

material, cultural, and civilizational wealth made possible by their application. In its ascendancy, it had to overcome functional theocracy, the divine right of kings, manorialism, and mercantilism, and it did so through a heady combination of life-affirming foundational principles, notably that of elevating the primacy of the individual, liberty, private property, and the rule of law above competing objectives. The self-actualization and material comfort realized through the practice of these universalist principles drew wide public support, in contrast with narrower ideologies designed largely to entrench incumbent interests.

In prevailing over predecessor forms of social and economic organization, classical liberalism created and commanded those institutions necessary for its continued propagation: commerce, government, primary education, colleges and universities, the civil service, and what we would now call NGOs. These pillars of civil society under republican government reinforced the foundational values of a free society, even where that society failed to live up to its values (in the U.S., the toleration of slavery, for example). Nevertheless, these foundational values have always shone through the murk of actual experience as aspirational destinations, much like a limit in calculus — a Platonic ideal to be approached ever more closely, but never perfectly achieved, if only due to the imperfectability of man.

Having cleared the field of more benighted belief systems, classical liberalism created institutions designed to sustain itself, which ultimately spawned (and were subsequently captured by) novel ideologies adept at exploiting freedom of inquiry and

of speech. Here we find an early expression of the Alinskyite tactic of making institutions live up to their own standards — in this case, exploiting the acceptance of speech itself designed to consequently inhibit and suppress other speech.

But why did these alien constructs arise? The suite of values constituting classical liberalism brushed away many religious, cultural, and civic guardrails of a proto-collectivist bent, but in so doing left a free society devoid of the antibodies necessary to combat a full-blown collectivist infection, assault.

Victorious in its prior wars of ideas with antiquated forms of social organization and mindful of the abject failure of collectivist projects ranging from small-bore Fabianism to the fall of the Soviet Union (RIP), classical liberalism no longer felt a pressing need to advocate for itself, as the logic of its fundamental tenets was seen to be largely self-evident, it had achieved unprecedented economic and cultural success wherever and whenever properly applied, and institutions of its own making would serve to reinforce and perpetuate its foundational principles.

This proved to be a chimera.

Falling standards of education in most of the liberal West — no more so than in the U.S. — made certain that such beliefs would no longer be “self-evident” but would rather be challenged at every turn by instructional fads ranging from Gaia-worship to promoting self-esteem *uber alles*. As for economic and cultural successes, these were and are quite real. But, for many communities, absent certain of the aforementioned guardrails of an older civil society, these have been empty successes obtained without value or meaning to many (alas, we are not Economic Man).

Lastly, the institutions — the mainstream and broadcast media, higher education, the foundations, high and low culture — created to safeguard liberal values each turned, one by one, against their original animating principles, leaving the very last — free enterprise — as the final rampart to fall, as it is now doing (observing corporate America eagerly embrace a collection racket in its blind support of “woke” ideology is an act of economic suicide I never thought I’d witness).

Even now, as the dumpster fire that is 2020 barrels on, pundits, publications, and various other outlets of the Right cheer liberal values without acknowledging that without institutional support and a sustained, full-throated multi-generational effort, the chances of such values being transmitted, embraced, and reinforced by civil society are exactly zero.

Let’s consider a straw man. If we’re truly a 50/50 nation, why does any of this matter? Perhaps there is something to those “it’s self-evident” arguments that assures that good can prevail even if left largely unsupported?

I would instead offer the view that, to the contrary, our current 50/50 condition reflects the residual social capital — and we have long been living off the principal of our civilizational inheritance — of once-functioning institutions, along with some element of what used to be called “common sense.” In fact, it’s a minor miracle we have a roughly evenly divided polity; this alone suggests the enduring strength and value of the liberal canon, even when depleted and left to wither unattended.

It is therefore critical that we “sharpen the saw” and make the case for liberal values. But how?

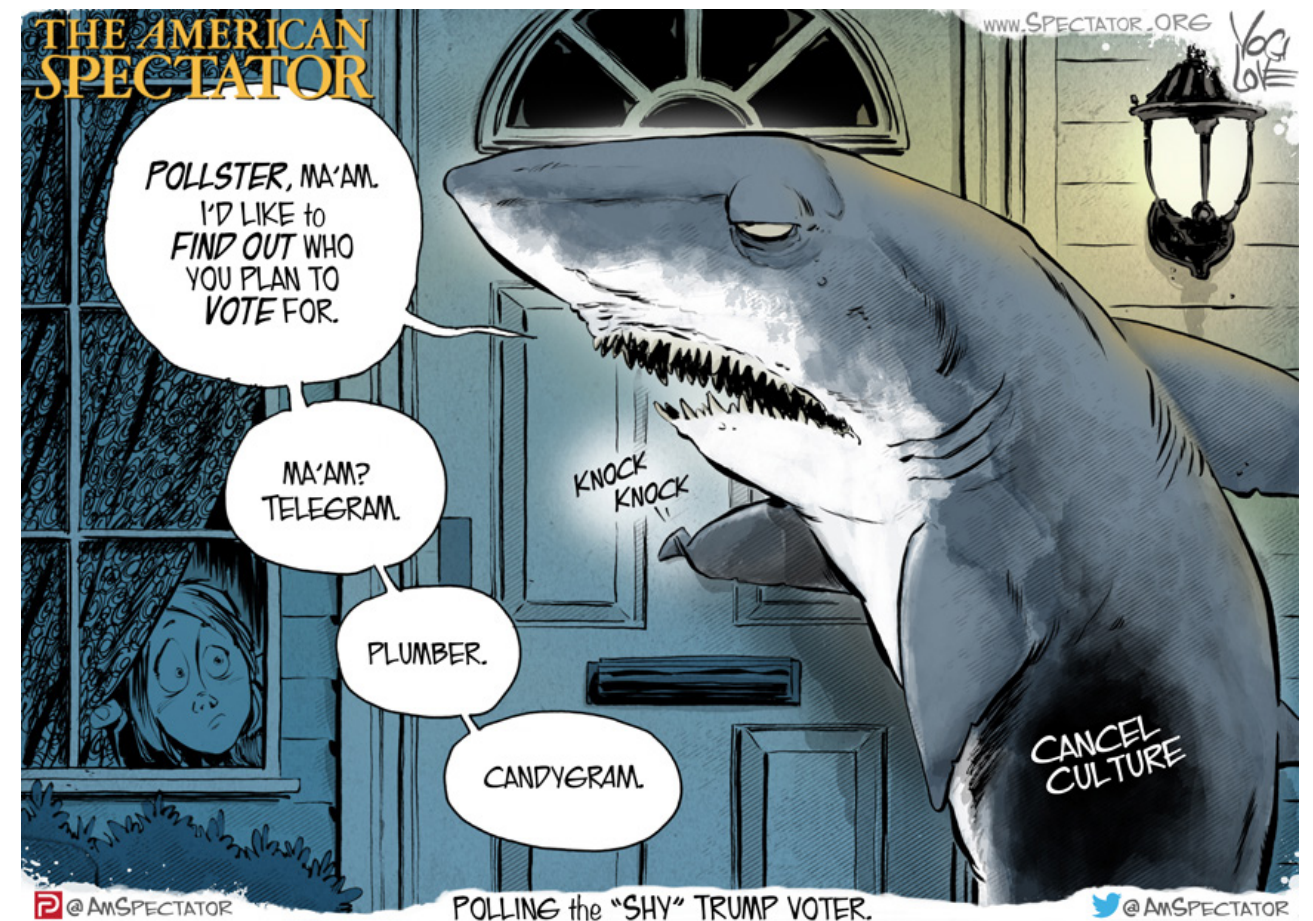
It’s not complicated. Enter every debate (enough of thinking our beliefs “self-evident”). Assume conflicting ideas, positions, and ideologies have intellectual merit, even when they don’t. Argue these points and their advocates into submission; ridicule their ignorance of logic, history, and human nature; and salt the fields once such points have fallen to make sure they never rise again.

Engage every community. Refuse to recognize intellectual ghettos. Go on campus, to urban areas, to “blue”

communities along every axis of engagement. Win hearts and minds one at a time, and do so on the unfriendliest of territory. Universal values should be spread, well, universally.

Retake and re-inhabit the institutions. The radical Left’s “long march” through academia from the 1950s and 1960s has brought us to where we are today; ground lost can be won back.

Much of the intellectual Right and its adherents have over the past two generations withdrawn from an increasingly hostile society into commercial materialism, family, or faith, even as the power of these institutions has receded at a societal level. As the saying goes, you may not be interested in war, but war is interested in you. Overused martial analogies aside, this is indeed a war — not merely a “culture war” as often characterized in the media, but a multi-front war about the ideas that will govern our future, and by extension the future of civilization more broadly. It is long past time to abandon our intellectual arrogance and take up the fight that is now upon us. ✎



On Hagia Sophia Again Becoming a Mosque

*“The universe of buildings,” as Thomas Whittemore once called it,
“is what the world needs most and has lost.”*

by Matthew Omolesky

Balabish, 1915

Thomas Whittemore and fellow members of the Egypt Exploration Society have spent the winter conducting excavations at this lonely site, a barren desert promontory on the eastern bank of the Nile, not too far from Abu Tisht in what is now Egypt’s Sohag Governorate. Here a series of Medjay and New Kingdom cemeteries, long buried beneath the silt, gravel, and fine sands of the Upper Egyptian wastelands, were gradually giving up their secrets, yielding everything from potsherds and sandals to axe heads and amulets, and all thanks to the strenuous efforts of the American Whittemore and his British colleague Gerald Avery Wainwright. It must have beggared belief, amidst the desolation of the Egyptian desert, that only a few months had passed since Whittemore had been in war-torn France working with the Red Cross, an experience that had given him an acrid taste of the horrors of the Great War. “Just returned from France for supplies,” he had wired home. “Acres of wounded. Unimaginable suffering. Operations without ether.” And though Whittemore had left the Western Front for the dig at Balabish, his thoughts remained back in Europe, for he was at heart only an amateur archaeologist. His true passion was philanthropy, and as soon as the cemetery excavation project seemed to be winding up, the American scholar was on his way back to France to join the Army Medical Service.

Thomas Whittemore was a consummate dilettante; indeed his life had all the makings of a *Bildungsroman* in the vein of Henry James or Edith

Wharton. Born into a prominent Boston family, Whittemore attended Tufts and Harvard before traveling to Paris, his architectural studies at the Sorbonne only the pretext for the undertaking of a Grand Tour across the length and breadth of Europe, from Italy over to Russia, and from Germany down to Bulgaria. It was his time in the Balkans that sparked his lifelong obsession with all things Byzantine. The Orthodox world — the “Byzantine Commonwealth,” as Dmitri Obolensky later called it — exerted a magnetic force upon the young American academic, who, shortly after returning from Balabish to France to assist in relief efforts, quickly changed tack yet again, as was his wont, making his way back to Bulgaria and then on to Russia. There Whittemore began his work on behalf of the Committee of Her Imperial Highness the Grand Duchess Tatiana Nikolaevna for the Temporary Relief of Victims of War, an organization founded to alleviate the plight of Russian expatriates in the Balkans and Asia Minor.

After the February Revolution of 1917, Whittemore was obliged to decamp once more, with Petrograd no longer being remotely safe. Now Constantinople beckoned, and Whittemore would treat the metropolis on the Bosphorus as a new base from which he could continue assisting Russian refugees, all the while lending a logistical hand to Bulgarian archaeologists investigating sites like Messemvria Basilica, the Red Church in Peruštica, and the Bělovo Basilica. For Whittemore, saving lives and preserving cultural patrimony were simply two faces

of the same humanitarian coin. It was appropriate, then, that in the year 1927 Whittemore both received the French *Légion d’honneur* for his efforts on behalf of Russian émigrés and also made his triumphant return to academia, teaching a course on Byzantine art at New York University. The itinerant scholar managed to last almost three years in Greenwich Village, attaining the rank of Assistant Professor. But Whittemore could not stay away from Istanbul for long, and so back he went, albeit this time with an even greater sense of purpose.

Istanbul, 1929

It is the evening of June 12, and Thomas Whittemore has invited eight of his friends to the Tokatlyan Hotel for a sumptuous dinner. These days the Tokatlyan is perhaps best known for its appearances in Agatha Christie’s *Parker Pyne Investigates* and *Murder on the Orient Express*, but its long and storied history includes stays by Leon Trotsky and Josephine Baker, its cruel vandalism during the Armenian Genocide, and an infamous incident in which the journalist and politician Ali Kemal (Boris Johnson’s great-grandfather) was abducted from the Tokatlyan barbershop and lynched during the Turkish War of Independence. It was at this legendary hotel on the Grande Rue de Pera, and on this momentous eventide, that Whittemore truly began to make history, proposing as he did the establishment of the Byzantine Institute of America. The scheme was well-received, and the Institute soon had an executive office in Boston, a library in Paris, and a field office in Istanbul (though it is now housed within the Dumbarton Oaks Research

Library and Collection in the Georgetown neighborhood of Washington, D.C.).

The renowned Byzantinist Sir Steven Runciman, in his capacity as press attaché at the British Legation in Sofia, and then as Professor of Byzantine Art and History at Istanbul University, would frequently cross paths with Whittemore over the years. Runciman waspishly dismissed his counterpart as “that old American fraud” even while enjoying his “rather eccentric company.” To Runciman, Whittemore was “a man whom professional archaeologists and scholars dismissed as a pretentious amateur,” and who “had a gift for making himself appear to be a charlatan,” but no one could deny Whittemore’s “persuasive powers,” which “enabled him to raise funds . . . from rich American ladies, whom he handled with superb artifice.” Whittemore’s powers of persuasion, it turned out, were by no means limited to dunning wealthy dowagers for charitable contributions.

After a stint back in Egypt on Byzantine Institute business, documenting the frescoes at the Coptic monasteries of Saints Anthony and Paul, Whittemore achieved his greatest coup yet, managing to convince the Turkish President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk to allow fieldworkers to remove the layers upon layers of plaster and whitewash that had covered the mosaics of the great Church of Hagia Sophia since the days of Sultan Mehmed II. Whittemore’s request was altogether brazen — the church had been converted to a mosque after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, and as of 1931 was still serving as an active place of Muslim worship — but the American scholar’s honeyed tongue was employed to good effect. There was even something of a precedent, for in 1847 the Sultan Abdülmeçid had allowed the Italian brothers Gaspere and Giuseppe Fossati to briefly uncover and sketch the mosaics before immediately covering them back up “out of respect for Muslim religious customs prohibiting the representation of humans.” It did not hurt that Atatürk was looking to modernize Turkey, sever the link between religion and state, and regularize relations with Greece and the West, so Whittemore’s request was received sympathetically. “Santa Sophia was a mosque the day that I talked to him,” Whittemore later boasted, but “the next morning, when I went to the mosque, there was a sign on the door written in

Ataturk’s own hand. It said: ‘The museum is closed for repairs.’”

The Hagia Sophia was soon a hive of archaeological activity, as gleaming depictions of Christ Pantocrator, Empress Zoë Porphyrogenita, Emperor John II Komnenos, and a great many others emerged from the formerly bare walls of the structure. When one mosaic was uncovered in April 1932, Whittemore

The architecture
of Hagia Sophia
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excitedly wrote to the Institute’s secretary, Seth Gano, informing him that excavators had “uncovered the first great cross in the lunette series [and that] the cross is of gorgeous red and emerald green enamel with jeweled extremities in which silver mosaics are introduced.” Even the most minor composition here could inspire awe, and even the most minute tessera could evoke an entire aesthetic universe, for each tile was laced with delicate filigrees of gold leaf and then positioned at an angle (typically between 15 and 30 degrees) optimized to reflect sunlight and candlelight. But the most astounding of all these mosaics must surely have been that of the Deësis, a 13th-century composition so remarkable in its sensitivity and humanism that it is widely accepted as having prefigured the entirety of Renaissance painting. A personal favorite of mine, however, remains the depiction of gamboling peacocks on the holy water font, a scene set beneath the wonderfully creative Greek palindrome *Nipson anomemata me monan opsin*, or “Wash your sins, not just your face.”

Sir Steven Runciman, in a fit of pique unbefitting of a scholar of his standing, took to calling Whittemore “the mosaic-cleaner of St. Sophia,” but the uncomfortable fact was that the English Byzantinist, though

a magnificent prose stylist and gifted popularizer, never produced anything comparable to Whittemore’s feat in revealing the mosaics of the Hagia Sophia. Thanks to the founder of the Byzantine Institute, we can understand the basilica not just as a physical structure, but as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a total or universal work of art that radiates majesty from the inside out, as well as a *locus sacratus* of world-historical importance. The architectural historian Mirjana Lozanovska has observed that “the image conveyed by Hagia Sofia is that of an expansion of space from the inside outwards; so much so that the whole structure from the outside appears as if it is about to burst. The exterior is a shell that accommodates the creative effects of the interior, an outcome of all its centrifugal and centripetal forces,” thereby acting “as a medium of devotion between self and another which lies beyond the self. In this sense, the architecture of Hagia Sophia brings into being a transcendence that mediates between individuals, nature and the universe.” The envoys of Prince Vladimir the Great of Kiev certainly agreed, for they reported having gone “into the Greek lands, and we were led into a place where they serve their God, and we did not know where we were, on heaven or on earth; and do not know how to tell about this. All we know is that God lives there with people and their service is better than in any other country. We cannot forget that beauty since each person, if he eats something sweet, will not take something bitter afterwards; so we cannot remain any more in paganism.” Vladimir Sviatoslavich was convinced, and in 988 the Kievan Rus’ were Christianized, in no small part due to the sheer splendor of the Church of Holy Wisdom.

There were those in Istanbul who objected to Whittemore’s restoration of the Hagia Sophia on religious grounds, but, as Charles King wrote in *Midnight at the Pera Palace*,

Secular Turks rallied in response. Halil Bey, the parliamentarian and museum curator, rose to Whittemore’s defense and stressed the scholarly and artistic nature of the enterprise. Yunus Nadi likewise hailed Whittemore’s work as the victor of science over religion. The original decision to plaster over the mosaics under Sultan Abdülmeçid I, he wrote in Cumburiyet, had been an expression of brutal religious

conservatism. Now, at last, the artistic glories of the city were being freed from their religious veils and revealed to their secular custodians.

By 1934, the Turkish Council of Ministers had declared the site a museum, the same year that the Byzantine Institute was officially issued a charter from the State of Massachusetts. Had Whittemore and his institute accomplished nothing else beyond the Hagia Sophia restoration, the project would still have to be considered a resounding success. As Whittemore concluded, the Hagia Sophia “is the universe of buildings. It is what the world needs most and has lost.” And he had given it back.

Ankara, 2020

It is July 2, and the Danistay, or Turkish Council of State, the highest administrative court in the Republic of Turkey, has been convened to consider whether the 1934 cabinet decree converting the Great Mosque of Ayasofya into a museum ought to be reversed. The meeting, we are told, lasted only 17 minutes, after which the court ruled that “the settlement deed allocated it as a mosque and its use outside this character is not possible legally.” Turkey’s president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan promptly signed a decree turning the site back into a place of Muslim worship, a move greeted in the Turkish parliament with a standing ovation by members of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). Reaction abroad was naturally less enthusiastic. United States Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had previously warned that the museum served “humanity as a much-needed bridge between those of differing faith, traditions and cultures,” and after the decision stated that “we are disappointed with the decision of the Turkish government. I have nothing further to add.” The Greek culture minister, Lina Mendoni, characterized the decision as an “open provocation to the civilised world,” while the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew deemed the move “unacceptable”; the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, for its part, declared July 24, the planned first day for Muslim prayers to be held at Ayasofya, to be “day of mourning and of manifest grief.”

Turkey’s official response to each and every one of these criticisms has been terse, but on some level coherent: “Hagia Sophia is the property of Turkey.” Thomas Madden, writing in *First Things*, has argued that the Hagia Sophia should “no more be a mosque than the Parthenon should

be restored to the worship of Athena,” but the fact of the matter is that polling indicates that 73 percent of Turks want Hagia Sophia converted to a mosque, whereas I imagine that there are vanishingly few Athenians looking to erect altars, burn offal, and leave votive offerings on the grounds of the Acropolis. The Islamization of Turkey under Erdoğan continues apace, with headscarves returning to the public square, with a new mosque being erected on the west side of Taksim Square (while

Secular Turkey is being systematically dismantled, and it was only a matter of time before the Hagia Sophia found itself in the crosshairs, the status of the former basilica having long been weaponized.

the nearby opera house is demolished), and with a marked shift in the country’s foreign policy heightening tensions throughout the region. Secular Turkey is being systematically dismantled, and it was only a matter of time before the Hagia Sophia found itself in the crosshairs, the status of the former basilica having long been weaponized. Back in 2015, the Turkish Muslim official Mefail Hızlı warned that Pope Francis’s references to the Armenian genocide “will only accelerate the process for Hagia Sophia to be re-opened for [Muslim] worship.” (It must be kept in mind, at the same time, that according to polling conducted by Metropoll, some 55 percent of respondents said that “the main reason for announcing the reconversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque would be to distract from debates on Turkey’s economic crisis and to boost the government’s hand ahead of a snap election.”)

Ultimately, Turkey possesses the Hagia Sophia by right of conquest and may do with it what it will, Russia and

Greece having both squandered several opportunities to return the city to the Orthodox and European fold. Whether or not Erdoğan would be willing to apply that logic to, say, Israel vis-à-vis Jerusalem is another story altogether. Indeed his speech announcing the conversion of the museum was generously interlarded with revanchism, including a call to resuscitate the world of Islam that once stretched from “Bukhara to Andalusia” and an assurance that “the resurrection of Hagia Sophia heralds the liberation of the al-Aqsa Mosque.” This Islamist rhetoric is a new twist on a long-standing tradition of ethnocentric atavism quite common in Turkish politics. After all, Atatürk may have jettisoned Islamism, but he replaced it with an equally strident sense of *Türklük*, or “Turkishness.” Under the infamous Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code, “insulting Turkishness” is a criminal offense, one that can be committed by, for example, merely mentioning the historical fact that is the Armenian genocide, something writers and journalists like Orhan Pamuk, Hrant Dink, and others have found out the hard way.

Turkish ethno-nationalism can reach extravagantly absurd proportions, such as when, in the 1930s, Turkish linguists propounded the so-called “sun language theory,” according to which all human languages are traced, somehow, back to a primal proto-Turkic language. More recently the travel writer William Dalrymple, during a visit to the Shrine of Saint George in Büyükkada, noted how fervently Muslim Turks were praying in what was ostensibly a Christian chapel:

“The Muslims also believe in St George,” explained a young Greek student I met waiting by the jetty a half an hour later. “They hear St George is working miracles so they come here and ask him for babies. Maybe they don’t know he is Greek.” “They probably think he is Turkish,” said her friend. “Probably,” said the first girl. “They think everything is Turkish. I’ve heard boys say Hagia Sophia and the Hippodrome were built by the Seljuk Turks.” “They don’t know history,” agreed the second girl. “One day some boy asked my sister, ‘Why do you Greeks come here? All you do is make trouble.’ She said, ‘We didn’t come: you did.’” “They even think Homer was one of them,” sighed the first girl. “They say he was a Turk and that his real name was Omar.”

It is even worse when Westerners play along, as was the case when *National Geographic*, in a resource library page on

Istanbul that had to be deleted after widespread Greek outcry, bizarrely referred to how “the Greeks and Romans were forced out by the indigenous Ottoman Turks.” In any event, it seems that we will be lucky if, after a few more years of Erdoğan/AKP rule, the Byzantine origins of the Hagia Sophia retain any purchase on the Turkish historical imagination, and we can only lament that the humane vision advanced by Thomas Whittemore, in which the radiance of the Church of Holy Wisdom might be a beacon to all — regardless of faith, and even in a professedly secular and majority Muslim nation — did not manage to last a century.

Konstantinoúpolis, 537

It is December 27, and Emperor Justinian I and Patriarch Menas have arrived at the newly completed Hagia Sophia to celebrate the basilica’s consecration. The church, designed to replace its Theodosian predecessor, which had gone up in flames during the Nika Revolt, took almost six years and 10,000 laborers to build. Paola Cesaretti noted that “the legends about the construction of the basilica tell of hidden treasures, messenger angels, and arks overflowing with gold dropping from Heaven,” though the “rigorous fiscal policy” of John the Cappadocian did not hurt, given that “the amount of money

that went into the construction of the church might have sufficed to support two million families for a whole year.” The result was, as we all know, a tour de force. The poet Paulus Silentiarius, in his 563 *Descr. S. Sophiae*, rhapsodized about “the glitter of cut mosaic,” the “thin slabs of marble,” the “discs of porphyry glittering with a beauty that charms the heart,” while the “roof is compacted of gilded tesserae from which a glittering stream of golden rays pours abundantly and strikes men’s eyes with irresistible force. It is as if one were gazing at the midday sun in spring, when he gilds each mountaintop.”

Justinian, upon entering the basilica for the first time, gave thanks to God but could not help but add the famous words, “Solomon, I have defeated you.” He understood then what Thomas Whittemore understood 14 centuries later, that the Hagia Sophia was “the universe of buildings,” providing “what the world needs most.” Thanks to Justinian and his geometrician-architects Isidore of Miletus and Anthemius of Tralles, the world was afforded the opportunity to witness divine transcendence made manifest in gold, marble, porphyry, and stucco. When Mehmed the Conqueror entered the Hagia Sophia in 1453, it was said that he remained silent, only later uttering the lines from a Persian poem:

The spider is a watchman in the palace of Khosrow.

The owl plays its watch music in the fort of Afrāsijāb.

At the moment of his greatest triumph, the Ottoman sultan realized that he was no more than an interloper, and that no military conquest could match the “irresistible force” with which the Church of Holy Wisdom strikes the viewer.

Thomas Whittemore helped reveal to us the gilded tesserae that after a millennium and a half still shine as brightly as the “midday sun in spring.” As of July 24, 2020, those mosaics will be covered once again during Muslim prayers. But will Erdoğan’s tatty curtains really suffice? As we have seen, practically every observer of the Hagia Sophia has remarked upon the unearthly glow that emanates from within the structure; Procopius, in *De aedificiis*, was among the first to observe how its interior “space is not illuminated by the sun from the outside, but that the radiance is generated within, so great an abundance of light bathes this shrine all around.” It is comforting to think that this is just the sort of incandescence that can never be dimmed, not by invasion, not by crusades or holy wars, not by earthquakes, not by neglect, not even by the depredations of our own hideous age. ✎



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Who Killed George Floyd?

Minnesota's attorney general needs to pay attention to the available evidence, which in this case is incontrovertible.

by George Parry

In the death of George Floyd, the State of Minnesota has charged former Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin with second-degree murder and former officers Thomas Lane, J. Alexander Kueng, and Tou Thao with aiding and abetting that murder. But, as will be shown in detail below, the physical, scientific, and electronically recorded evidence in the case overwhelmingly and conclusively proves that these defendants are not guilty of the charges and, in fact, played no material role in bringing about Floyd's death.

Instead, the evidence proves that, when he first encountered the police, George Floyd was well on his way to dying from a self-administered drug overdose. Moreover, far from publicly, brazenly, and against their own self-interest slowly and sadistically killing Floyd in broad daylight before civilian witnesses with video cameras, the evidence proves that the defendants exhibited concern for Floyd's condition and twice called for emergency medical services to render aid to him. Strange behavior, indeed, for supposedly brutal law officers allegedly intent on causing him harm.

Similarly, the evidence recorded by the body cameras worn by the police conclusively establishes that Floyd repeatedly complained that he couldn't breathe *before* the police restrained him on the ground. As documented by Floyd's autopsy and toxicology reports, his breathing difficulty was caused not by a knee on his neck or pressure on his back, but by the fact that he had in his bloodstream over *three times* the potentially lethal limit of fentanyl, a powerful and dangerous pain medication known to shut down the respiratory system and cause coma and death. He also had in his system

a lesser dose of methamphetamine, which can cause paranoia, respiratory distress, coma, and death.

Beyond those findings, his autopsy disclosed no physical injuries that could in any way account for his demise.

The transcript of the video footage from the camera worn by Officer Thomas Lane combined with the transcript of the video from Officer Alexander Kueng's camera lay out on a second-by-second basis all that transpired in their presence from the time they arrived on the scene through Lane's ambulance trip with Floyd to the hospital.

Upon their arrival, Lane and Kueng were told by a person identified as "Speaker 1" that a man in the "blue [Mercedes] Benz" parked in front of "Cup Foods" had passed "a fake [\$20] bill." As the officers approached the car, they observed concerning movements in the front seat by the person later identified as Floyd.

Lane drew his sidearm and ordered Floyd approximately seven times to show his hands. Once Floyd finally placed his hands on the steering wheel, Lane holstered his weapon. Nevertheless, Floyd continued to plead with Lane not to shoot him despite Lane's repeated assurances that he was not going to shoot.

After he exited the car, Floyd was non-compliant and continued to resist and move about until he was handcuffed and seated on the sidewalk.

Lane and Kueng questioned Floyd and the other two occupants of the car concerning Floyd's behavior and whether he might be under the influence of drugs.

As the officers tried to move Floyd to a police car, the following exchange occurred (bold print supplied for emphasis):

Lane to Floyd: **What, are you on something right now?**

Floyd: No, nothing.

Kueng: **Because you are acting a little erratic.**

Lane: Let's go. Let's go.

Floyd: I'm scared, man.

Lane: Let's go.

Kueng: **You got foam around your mouth, too?**

Floyd: **Yes, I was just hooping earlier.**

Lane: Let's go.

Floyd: Man, all right let me calm down now. I'm feeling better now.

Lane: Keep walking.

Floyd: Can you do me one favor, man?

Lane: No, when we get to the car. Let's get to the car, man, come on.

Kueng: Stop moving around.

Floyd: **Oh man, God don't leave me man. Please man, please man.**

Lane to Kueng: Here. I want to watch that car [the blue Mercedes Benz] too, so just get him in [the police car].

Kueng to Floyd: Stand up, **stop falling down!** Stay on your feet and face the car door!

Floyd: **I'm claustrophobic man, please man, please.**

Later in the video transcripts are these exchanges:

Floyd: Please, man. Don't leave me by myself man, I'm just **claustrophobic**, that's it.

Lane: Well, you're still going in the [police] car.

Kueng to Floyd: **Why are you having trouble walking?**

Floyd: Because officer [inaudible]

Lane: I'll roll the windows down, okay?

Kueng to Floyd at the door to the squad car: Take a seat!

Floyd: **Y'all I'm going to die in here! I'm going to die, man!**

Kueng: You need to take a seat right now!

Floyd: And I just had COVID man, I don't want to go back to that.

Lane: Okay, I'll roll the windows down. Hey, listen!

Floyd: Dang, man.

Lane: Listen!

Floyd: I'm not that kind of guy.

Lane: I'll roll the windows down if you put your legs in [the squad car] all right? I'll put the air on.

Speaker 9 [civilian] to Floyd: Quit resisting bro.

Floyd: I don't want to win. **I'm claustrophobic**, and I got anxiety, I don't want to do nothing to them!

Lane: I'll roll the window down.

Floyd: I'm scared as fuck man.

Speaker 9: That's okay [inaudible]

Floyd: [inaudible] **when I start breathing it's going to go off on me, man.**

Lane: Pull your legs in.

Floyd: Okay, okay, let me count to three and then I'm going in please.

Speaker 9: You can't win!

As the officers continued their efforts to get Floyd into the police car, he continued to resist and repeatedly insisted that he was "claustrophobic." Floyd hit his head on the car's window and suffered a minor cut. Consequently, the police placed a "Code 2" call for Emergency Medical Services to tend to the wound.

And then, after Kueng told him once again to "take a seat" in the squad car, Floyd announced, **"I can't choke, I can't breathe Mr. Officer! Please! Please!"**

And then, this was said:

Floyd: I want to lay on the ground. I want to lay on the ground. I want to lay on the ground!

Lane: You're getting in the squad [car].

Floyd: I want to lay on the ground! I'm going down, I'm going down, I'm going down.

Kueng: Take a squat [sic].

Floyd: I'm going down.

Speaker 9: **Bro, you about to have a heart attack and shit man, get in the car!**

Floyd: **I know I can't breathe. I can't breathe.** [crosstalk]

Lane: **Get him on the ground.**

Floyd: **Let go of me man, I can't breathe. I can't breathe.**

Lane: Take a seat.

Floyd: Please man listen to me.

Officer Chauvin: Is he going to jail?

Floyd: Please listen to me.

Kueng: He's under arrest right now for forgery. [inaudible] what's going on.

Floyd: Forgery for what? For what?

Lane: Let's take him out [of the squad car] and just MRT [Maximal Restraint Technique by which a suspect's feet are "hobbled" to his waist].

Floyd: **I can't fucking breathe man. I can't fucking breathe.**

Kueng: Here. Come on out [of the squad car]!

Floyd: [inaudible] Thank you. Thank you.

Officer Thao: Just lay him on the ground.

Let's hit the pause button and consider the evidence so far. Floyd was incoherent, acting erratically, non-compliant, and foaming at the mouth. He was having trouble walking and standing up. He wanted to lie on the ground. But, while still upright, he complained three times that he was "claustrophobic," seven times that he "can't breathe," and twice that he was "going to die." And Speaker 9 exclaimed that Floyd looked like he was about to have a "heart attack."

All of this happened *before* he was on the ground and immobilized by the police. Nevertheless, as he continued to resist and behave irrationally, his condition deteriorated and his complaints of being unable to breathe increased in frequency even though no one was applying force of any kind to his neck or compressing his back or chest.

After Floyd was on the ground, he continued to move about and say that he couldn't breathe. Lane was near Floyd's feet, Kueng at the middle of Floyd's body, and Chauvin at his back and head with his knee on Floyd's neck.

Thao: Is he high on something?

Kueng: I'm assuming so, we found a pipe.

Lane: He wouldn't get out of the car. He wasn't following instructions. [crosstalk] ...

Floyd: Please, I can't breathe. Please man. Please man!

Thao: **Do you have EMS [Emergency Medical Services] coming code 3?**

Lane: **Ah code 2, we can probably step it up then. You got it?** [crosstalk]

Floyd: Please, man!

Thao: Relax!

Floyd: I can't breathe.

Kueng: You're fine, you're talking fine.

Lane: Your talken (sic), Deep breath.

Floyd: I can't breathe. I can't breathe. Ah! I'll probably just die this way.

Thao: Relax.

Floyd: I can't breathe my face.

Lane: He's got to be on something.

Thao: What are you on?

Floyd: I can't breathe. Please, [inaudible] I can't breathe. Shit.

Speaker 9: Well get up and get in the car, man. Get up and get in the car.

Floyd: I will. I can't move.

Speaker 9: Let him get in the car.

Lane: We found a weed pipe on him, there might be something else, there might be like PCP or something. **Is that shaking of the eyes right is PCP?**

Floyd: My knees, my neck.

Lane: Where their eyes like shake back and forth really fast?

Floyd: I'm through, I'm through. I'm claustrophobic. My stomach hurts. My neck hurts. Everything hurts. I need some water or something, please. Please? I can't breathe officer.

Chauvin: Then stop talking, stop yelling.

Floyd: You're going to kill me, man.

Chauvin: Then stop talking, stop yelling, it takes a heck of a lot of oxygen to talk.

Floyd: Come on, man. Oh, oh. [crosstalk] I cannot breathe. I cannot breathe. Ah! They'll kill me. They'll kill me. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. Oh!

Speaker 8: We tried that for 10 minutes.

Floyd: Ah! Ah! Please. Please. Please.

Lane: Should we roll him on his side?

Chauvin: No, he's staying put where we got him.

Lane: **Okay. I just worry about the excited delirium or whatever.**

Chauvin: **That's why we got the ambulance coming.**

As Floyd continued to shout that he couldn't breathe and called for his mother, a radio transmission was recorded saying that the ambulance was approximately four blocks away. When it arrived, Lane got in the ambulance and helped to give Floyd CPR on the way to the hospital.

Before we discuss further what happened at the scene, let's take a look at Floyd's 20-page autopsy and toxicology report.

The autopsy report by the Hennepin County Medical Examiner's Office is titled

“Cardiopulmonary Arrest Complicating Law Enforcement Subdual Restraint, and Neck Compression.” Strangely enough, the report, which thoroughly sets forth in detail all physical and toxicological findings, makes no other mention of the purported cause of death. In fact, the first iteration of the report didn’t even mention “law enforcement subdual, restraint, and neck compression,” and the criminal complaint filed by prosecutors stated that the autopsy “revealed no physical findings that support a diagnosis of traumatic asphyxia or strangulation.”

Moreover, prior to issuing the autopsy report, the Hennepin County Medical Examiner preliminarily found that the “autopsy revealed no physical findings that support a diagnosis of traumatic asphyxia or strangulation. Mr. Floyd had underlying health conditions including coronary artery disease and hypertensive heart disease. The combined effects of Mr. Floyd being restrained by the police, his underlying health conditions and **any potential intoxicants in his system** likely contributed to his death” (emphasis added).

These preliminary findings by the Medical Examiner were incorporated in the Statement of Probable Cause attached to the arrest warrant for Officer Chauvin, which was filed on May 29, 2020. This date is significant because, as you will see, neither the Medical Examiner nor the prosecutors had yet received Floyd’s toxicology report. That report was issued by NMS Labs of Horsham, Pennsylvania, on May 31, 2020.

In short, Chauvin was charged with third-degree murder (later raised to second-degree murder by Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison) without the benefit of a complete and competent investigation of all the relevant facts and circumstances of Floyd’s death.

Apparently dissatisfied with the Hennepin County Medical Examiner’s findings, the Floyd’s family attorney had a re-autopsy performed by Dr. Michael Baden,¹ the former Chief Medical Examiner of New York City, and Dr. Allecia Wilson of the University of Michigan.

In announcing the re-autopsy findings, Dr. Wilson stated that she and Dr. Baden “have seen accounts from the complaint and based on that, yes our findings do differ [from those of the Hennepin County Medical Examiner].

Some of the information that I read from that complaint states that there was no evidence of traumatic asphyxia. This is the point in which we do disagree. There is evidence in this case of mechanical or traumatic asphyxia.”

However, Dr. Wilson conceded that they did not have access to toxicology results, tissue samples, or some organs, but added that those items “are not likely to change” the results of the re-autopsy.

By the training that they had received, the police defendants would have no reason to believe that Chauvin’s kneeling on Floyd’s neck was either causing serious harm or anything other than the approved standard operating procedure.

The re-autopsy concluded that, even without physical evidence of traumatic asphyxia, such as broken bones in the neck, the compression on Floyd’s neck and chest still caused his death by depriving his brain of blood and oxygen and his lungs of air. Dr. Baden stated that the pressure was not visibly supported by autopsy because the pressure applied by the police had been released by the time the body was examined. Noting that “the video is real,” Dr. Baden added that the abrasions on the left side of Floyd’s face and shoulder showed how hard police had pressed him against the pavement. Dr. Wilson also referenced this “physical evidence that there was pressure applied to his [Floyd’s] neck.”

After Drs. Baden and Wilson concluded that Floyd’s death was “a homicide due to the way he was being subdued,” the Hennepin County Medical Examiner then amended his report to

include the reference to “complicating law enforcement subdual, restraint, and neck compression.”

With all due respect to Drs. Baden and Wilson, however, they rendered their opinion as to the cause of death without, by their own admission, having considered the results of Floyd’s toxicology screen. If they had, they would have seen that, at the time of death, Floyd was under the influence of a lethal overdose of fentanyl, which, according to the toxicology report, is a rapid-acting synthetic morphine substitute “reported to be 80 to 200 times as potent as morphine,” as well as a lesser dose of methamphetamine, which can also cause convulsions, circulatory collapse, coma, and death.

But before we get to the details of Floyd’s tox screen, let’s consider the following autopsy findings by the Hennepin County Medical Examiner:

- No life-threatening injuries identified
1. No facial, oral, mucosal, or conjunctival petechiae
 2. No injuries of anterior muscles of neck or laryngeal structures
 3. No scalp soft tissue, skull or brain injuries
 4. No chest wall soft tissue injuries, rib fractures (other than a single rib fracture from CPR), vertebral column injuries, or visceral injuries
 5. Incision and subcutaneous dissection of posterior and lateral neck, shoulders, back, flanks, and buttocks negative for occult trauma.

Some commentators have attached great importance to the finding of no “facial, oral or conjunctival petechiae,” which are small red or purple hemorrhages that can result from asphyxiation such as would occur if pressure was applied to block the flow of blood to the brain. However, while these petechiae can result when that happens, their absence does not necessarily prove that no such compression occurred.

Instead, the more pertinent question is whether Chauvin’s kneeling on one side of Floyd’s neck cut off the blood flow through *both* carotid arteries to his brain. The carotids are located on each side of

¹ In the interests of full disclosure, I have known Dr. Baden for over 40 years. He has testified as an expert on behalf of my clients in a number of cases and is a person of great integrity, skill, charm, and learning.

the neck, and people can live with only one functioning carotid artery. This raises the question as to whether Chauvin’s direct application of pressure to only one side of Floyd’s neck cut off the carotid artery on the *other* side of his neck.

Moreover, in regard to Chauvin’s possible criminal intent or purported desire to harm Floyd, Minnesota police are trained to use a “neck restraint” technique, which is defined in the official training literature as “compressing one or both sides of a person’s neck with an arm or leg, without applying direct pressure to the trachea or airway (front of the neck).” The video of Chauvin kneeling on the side of Floyd’s neck appears in all respects to be a textbook application of this officially approved technique. Put another way, by the training that they had received, the police defendants would have no reason to believe that Chauvin’s kneeling on Floyd’s neck was either causing serious harm or anything other than the approved standard operating procedure.

We know from the video transcripts that Floyd, in addition to complaining about being unable to breathe while he was still upright, repeated that complaint for a matter of minutes while he was on the ground and being restrained by

police. But Floyd remained conscious and complaining for several minutes. How can that be if Chauvin’s knee had cut off the flow of blood to Floyd’s brain? If the police had cut off the flow

Defense counsel should blow up those sections of the toxicology report to Mount Rushmore—size proportions, hang them on the courtroom wall, and read them every five minutes to the jury.

of blood and oxygen to Floyd’s brain, he would have lost consciousness within seconds, not minutes. (See Nichols, Larry, *Law Enforcement Patrol Operations: Police Systems and Practices*, McCutcheon Publishing Company, 1995.)

So why couldn’t Floyd breathe, and how did he die? The clear answers to those

questions are to be found in his toxicology report, which overwhelmingly and unerringly supports the conclusion that Floyd’s breathing difficulties and death were the direct and undeniable result of his ingestion of fentanyl mixed with methamphetamine.

When Floyd arrived at the hospital, his blood was drawn. According to the toxicology report, postmortem testing of that blood established the presence of, among other drugs, “Fentanyl 11 ng/mL” (nanograms per milliliter). In that regard, tucked away in the report’s “Reference Comments” is this: “Signs associated with fentanyl toxicity include **severe respiratory depression, seizures, hypotension, coma and death**. In fatalities from fentanyl, blood concentrations are variable and have been reported **as low as 3 ng/mL**.”

Got that? According to the toxicology report, which is central to the prosecution’s case, at *11 ng/mL*, Floyd had over *three times the potentially lethal 3 ng/mL* dose of fentanyl in his bloodstream when he arrived unresponsive at the hospital.

Similarly, the toxicology report also disclosed the presence of methamphetamine, which it states is “capable of causing hallucinations, aggressive behavior and irrational reactions” as well as “restlessness,



confusion, hallucinations, **circulatory collapse** and convulsions.”

Defense counsel should blow up those sections of the toxicology report to Mount Rushmore—size proportions, hang them on the courtroom wall, and read them every five minutes to the jury. They more than explain Floyd’s bizarre behavior, inability to stand, difficulty walking, and complaints about being unable to breathe while sitting, standing, and lying on the ground.

Moreover, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, among the most common characteristics of a fentanyl overdose is **“foaming at the mouth ... and confusion or strange behavior before the person became unresponsive”** (emphasis added). In short, Floyd’s foaming at the mouth, incoherence, physical incapacity,

non-compliant behavior, breathing difficulty, and rapid downward spiral into unconsciousness and death are fully explained by the toxicological evidence that he had ingested a massively lethal overdose of fentanyl mixed with a smaller dose of similarly dangerous and debilitating methamphetamine. In other words, by the time he first encountered the police, Floyd had already rendered himself a dead man walking and was only minutes away from expiring.

So, who killed George Floyd? He did.

The only crime here has been the prosecution’s shockingly incompetent investigation of Floyd’s death. In charging and continuing to prosecute these defendants, Minnesota’s attorney general has failed to take into account the most important and material

evidence in the case, i.e., the fact that Floyd’s inability to breathe started while he was still upright and mobile and the scientific proof that his death was the direct and inescapable result of a massively fatal overdose of a powerful and dangerous drug known to cause, in the words of the toxicology report, “severe respiratory depression, seizures, hypotension, coma and death.”

The proof of the defendants’ innocence is undeniable. But given the violence and rioting that has followed in the wake of Floyd’s death, will it be possible for these defendants to receive justice? In other words, will there be a judge or jury with enough integrity and courage to defy the mob and, in recognition of the clear and overwhelming exculpatory evidence, set these wrongfully accused men free? ❧

Anti-Israel NYU:

The Gaza of Greenwich Village

As the fall semester starts, it’s time to speak out against the college’s shameful indoctrination of students.

by A.J. Caschetta

New York University is no longer content to be the second most important anti-Zionist campus in New York City. Columbia University, with its Center for Palestine Studies, has first place locked up. But lately my *alma mater* has accelerated its anti-Israel activism in an apparent attempt to out-Palestine Columbia, albeit with a cast of lesser-known BDS ideologues.

Columbia has earned the appellation “Ramallah on the Hudson,” but NYU is working overtime to become the Gaza of Greenwich Village.

At the core of NYU’s transformation is the Hagop Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies, the central hub connecting over a dozen other departments, initiatives, projects, centers, and clubs that demonize Israel and rationalize Palestinian and Iranian atrocities.

Among the Kevorkian associates are the Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies Department, the Social and Cultural Analysis Department, the Skirball Center for the Performing Arts (and its “Practitioners in Residence” associates), the Iranian Studies Initiative, the NYU Abu Dhabi Institute, NYU’s chapters of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) and the Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP), NYC Solidarity with Palestine, NYU Out of Occupied Palestine, and Israel Apartheid Week. Another associate, the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, employs noted anti-Israel activist Helga Tawil-Souri and Hamas/Hezbollah apologist Arun Kundnani.

Each ally contributes its own special approach promoting Palestinianism and denigrating Israel, applying its own field-specific veneer of scholarship and just the right jargon to seduce young minds.

Three individuals stand out from the crowd of Palestinophiles at NYU responsible

for this metamorphosis: Zachary Lockman, Andrew Ross, and Ali Mirsepassi.

As chair of the Department of Middle East and Islamic Studies, and former president of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA), Zachary Lockman wields a great deal of the negative influence at NYU. Lockman has stacked his department with a gaggle of post-colonialists and grievance-mongers; 25 out of 39 are Hagop Kevorkian faculty members. Try though I did, I was unable to find a single faculty member with anything positive to say about Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East.

Lockman himself is an apologist for Palestinian terrorism who argues that BDS activists connected to terrorist groups have a right to speak in the United States. He scorns those (as he did me) who believe that preventing them from coming here is common sense. Lockman writes for the wildly one-sided Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP), which specializes in exaggerating Israeli and ignoring Palestinian aggression, and he edits the project’s *Middle East Report*. In one particularly arrogant MERIP article, Lockman belittles Martin Kramer’s groundbreaking study *Ivory Towers on Sand* (2001) as “shallow and tendentious.” Lockman isn’t qualified to carry Martin Kramer’s bookbag. Martin Kramer has forgotten things Zachary Lockman will never know.

Andrew Ross began his career as an English professor and now chairs the Department of Social and Cultural Analysis. He has written on a variety of topics but has lately turned his attention to promoting Palestinianism and belittling Israel. His latest book, *Stone Men: The Palestinians Who Built Israel* (2019), combines

his disdain for capitalism, working-class-hero rhetoric, and keen hatred of Israel. Among his more obtuse complaints is that Israel unfairly “prohibits [Palestinians] from using dynamite” in the stone quarries. I can’t imagine why.

Ross, a frequent speaker at NYU’s annual Israel Apartheid Week, is a board member of the U.S. Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel. When he decided that the BDS “progress” at NYU was insufficient, he forced a vote in his department’s last meeting of the 2018–19 academic year that prohibited cooperation with NYU’s Tel Aviv campus. It was pure virtue-signaling since his department has no ties to the Israeli campus.

In his writings and interviews, Ross advocates for “reparative justice,” by which he means forcing Israel to yield to Palestinian demands for the “restoration of lost property, compensation for decades of moral suffering, [and] the right of return.”

Like Lockman, Ross has loaded his department with anti-Israel ideologues, including Lisa Duggan, the American Studies Association president who invited Noura Erakat to speak at NYU, and Crystal Parikh, who blocked a student’s request for a pro-Israel speaker to counter Erakat’s talk. When one of Ross’s newly minted Ph.D. graduates, Andrew Thrasher, spoke at the 2019 graduation ceremony and praised his campus’s BDS efforts, NYU president Andrew Hamilton was compelled to issue an apology.

Ali Mirsepassi, the third member of NYU’s terrible triumvirate, was until recently director of the Kevorkian Center and still directs its Iranian Studies Initiative (ISI). Mirsepassi earned a bachelor’s degree in political science from the University of Tehran in 1974, and graduate degrees from American University, beginning in 1980. He

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has written several books on democracy in Iran, which makes him a fiction writer. He may as well write books on the Loch Ness monster and Bigfoot. Mirsepassi too has populated the ISI with people dedicated to a single vision: normalizing relations with Iran, defending the disastrous Obama nuclear deal (the JCPOA), and downplaying the horrors of the Ayatollah Khomeini's 1979 Islamic Revolution. The ISI hosts events that promote dubious scholars like Hamid Dubashi, the Hagop Kevorkian Professor of Iranian Studies at Columbia University. It also lists as a "practitioner-in-residence" Trita Parsi, Barack Obama's Iranian adviser and academia's chief cheerleader for the JCPOA.

Through its network of allies, the Kevorkian Center promotes anti-Semitism disguised as "support of the many communities that are marginalized or stand at risk from various forms of oppression such as racism and xenophobia, Islamophobia, and punitive government policies."

A brief sampling of Kevorkian activism exposes its one-sided version of history. For instance, in 2018 it sponsored a "theatrical experience" titled *The Siege*, billed as "a passionate retelling of the story of the 2002 siege of Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity," claiming that "armed Palestinian fighters ... were given sanctuary" at the church and were subsequently seized by the IDF. In reality, it was Palestinian fighters from Hamas, Tanzim, and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades who seized the church, held the people there hostage, stole artifacts, and treated it like their own personal PLO latrine, even using Bibles as toilet paper.

In 2018, the Kevorkian Center held a panel discussion titled "The Assault on the Right to Boycott," and in 2019 it co-hosted a lecture with the Skirball Center featuring Linda Sarsour speaking on "Migration, Refugees, and the Politics of Sanctuary." Sarsour's anti-Semitism is so widely recognized that the Women's March movement she started dumped her and Joe Biden was embarrassed that she spoke at the Democratic Convention ... sort of.

NYU's motto, *Perstare et praestare*, means to persevere and excel, but to what end is it persevering and in what exactly is it excelling? The Kevorkian Center seems to have united the entire NYU arts and humanities complex into an institution that inculcates hatred for Israel, advocates for Palestinians, and teaches skepticism of American greatness. It is the eye of a perfect storm of ahistorical historians and "Palestine" cheerleaders, abetted by

an administration that thinks Palestinian activism is a bonus, and feeding off the apparent indifference of the millionaire donors who run the Tisch, Sterne, Loeb, and Bobst fortunes. Synergy.

One predictable outcome of NYU's miseducation was on full display last spring, when a new NYU graduate named Leen Dweik (a Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies major according to her Buzzfeed article last year criticizing Chelsea Clinton for insufficient "wokeness"), showed her indifference to the death of Israel's first coronavirus victim. After 88-year-

The Kevorkian Center seems to have united the entire NYU arts and humanities complex into an institution that inculcates hatred for Israel, advocates for Palestinians, and teaches skepticism of American greatness.

old Holocaust survivor Aryeh Even succumbed to the virus, Dweik tweeted, "anyway should i paint my nails red or green today." The remark was so egregious that NYU spokesman John Beckman issued a condemnation, calling Dweik's vile social media performance "shameful and callous."

NYU's transformation has taken years to get this far, and its progress on the road to becoming the Gaza of Greenwich Village won't be arrested without "resistance" (to use a favorite term of today's Left). NYU's statement about Leen Dweik's vile behavior and apology following Andrew Thrasher's comments at the 2019 graduation indicate that the administration will respond to public criticism. A concerted effort of alumni, parents, concerned New Yorkers, and the Department of Education might slow NYU's regrettable slide into activism. The Kevorkian Center is a beneficiary of Title VI funding, meaning that it is supported not only by tuition-paying parents but by

everyone who pays taxes. If decent people everywhere let NYU's president (andrew.hamilton@nyu.edu) know they don't approve of the ways NYU is spending their money, he might listen. Money talks.

The Kevorkian Center currently stands at a threshold. On June 12, it announced on Twitter that Ali Mirsepassi was stepping down as director and that Jared McCormick, director of graduate studies, was temporarily assuming the role of acting director. I was told by the Center's Communications and Program Administrator that a full-time director would be appointed soon.

The chances are almost zero that the new director will be someone inclined to treat Israel objectively and historically. NYU's selection likely will be another anti-Israel Palestinophile.

It wasn't always this way at NYU. Or at least it didn't seem so. When I was a graduate student there (1985–95), it would have been unimaginable for the administration to confer a President's Service Award to the hate group Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) for "extraordinary and positive impact on the University Community," but that's exactly what happened last year. In response to that disgrace, Judea Pearl, father of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl, who was murdered by Al-Qaeda's Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, renounced his status as a distinguished alumnus of NYU. Since I am not a distinguished alumnus, I cannot make such a gesture. I can only proclaim my embarrassment and shame at what NYU is becoming: just another beast in the anti-Semitic, anti-Israel academic herd.

One look at the Hagop Kevorkian Center's plans for the fall 2020 semester shows that grim reality. Through a series of events glorifying "resistance," "protest cycles," "digital dissent," and "revolution," NYU will spend the next few months challenging Columbia University for that coveted first-place position as the most important anti-Israel campus in New York City, well on its way to becoming the Gaza of Greenwich Village.

Competition for *the* most anti-Israel university is fierce. Brown University just named a chair of Palestinian Studies after PLO poet Mahmoud Darwish, and Harvard University just hired the PLO's Saeb Erekat to mentor graduate students. To win this game, NYU may have to offer the director position to a Hamas leader like Ismail Haniyeh or Khaled Mashal. Either one could teach one hell of a seminar on "resistance." 🐘

Follow the Science: Health Professionals Say Lockdowns Were a Massive Mistake

According to the "Great Barrington Declaration," signed by thousands of health professionals, shutdowns overreached by a mile.

by Reed Spaulding IV, MD

President Trump caused a bit of a commotion this week when he didn't die from the coronavirus. Much to the dismay of many folks on the left, he seems to be making a nice recovery from his illness. Perhaps what has offended people more than his continued life is the bravado that he is projecting post-hospitalization at Walter Reed. On Monday, he tweeted in part, "Feeling really good. Don't be afraid of Covid. Don't let it dominate your life." You can almost imagine the blood vessels popping in folks' eyes over at CNN and MSNBC. In these politically polarized times, while half the country mourns the commander-in-chief's apparent survival, perhaps it's worthwhile for all Americans (and indeed, folks all around the world) to reconsider the level of pure panic and fear that our governments and the media have instilled in us.

Trump shoots from the hip and often pisses people off. No shock there. Of course responsible citizens should be *concerned* about contracting SARS-CoV-2, but should they be irrationally *afraid* of it?

Coronavirus is certainly deadly in a small percentage of people who become infected, primarily those with advanced age and comorbidities (i.e. folks like Donald Trump). No one is denying that fact, and no serious medical professional would do so. With time comes data, and with data comes a responsibility for the soothsayers to gaze backwards for a change. True, some said early on that unfocused, unilateral lockdowns were detrimental, but those opinions were mostly viewed as outliers. Not so anymore.

The "Great Barrington Declaration" came to be after a meeting of world-renowned epidemiologists, economists,

and journalists, sponsored by the American Institute for Economic Research. The original signers and co-signers are an impressive group of academicians, including well-respected professors from Harvard, Stanford, and Oxford, to name a few. As I write this, 5,201 public health scientists and 10,217 medical practitioners have signed this petition. The petition calls for what the authors call "focused protection." Per the declaration:

The most compassionate approach that balances the risks and benefits of reaching herd immunity, is to allow those who are at minimal risk of death to live their lives normally to build up immunity to the virus through natural infection, while better protecting those who are at highest risk.

As the authors point out,

vulnerability to death from COVID-19 is more than a thousand-fold higher in the old and infirm than the young. Indeed, for children, COVID-19 is less dangerous than many other harms, including influenza.

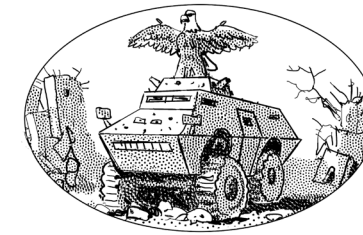
It's worthwhile to read the full document. Until now, politicians have sanctimoniously scoffed at those of us who didn't support drastic lockdowns because we supposedly weren't "following the science." Well, this is a declaration from many of the world's leading epidemiologists who recognize that lockdowns were a mistake.

This document with its ever-growing list of co-signers has important implications for the future. We have to decide what kind of world we are going to live in. Most states still have shutdowns of various flavors in place. Already, Bill de Blasio, the mayor of

New York City, is starting the second wave of shutdowns in that city in response to a spike in cases. What do case numbers even matter if most everyone who contracts the virus survives it? And isn't there a certain amount of risk that living a free life requires? The notion of locking down completely and going into hiding in response to a virus has never been attempted (at least not to this scale), and it's important that those of us who value liberty and life stand firm in our assessment of government's actions over the past year: they have been terribly misguided, they have harmed our lives and livelihoods greatly, and we should never allow this to happen again. Never.

It turns out that President Trump was mostly (but not entirely) correct in his recent Twitter escapade. COVID-19 can be serious and, in very rare cases, unpredictably so. We should all have a reasonable level of fear concerning this virus. We should all take reasonable precautions to prevent spreading this illness. We should not, however, ruin our lives and continue to destroy the engines of the world. It isn't warranted. The morbidity and mortality rates don't support it, and a focused approach is far less destructive to the economy and to our overall emotional and physical health. It's nice to see that increasing numbers of the world's preeminent public health scientists are finally starting to look at the data and come down on the side of common sense for a change. A bigger challenge will be convincing the bureaucrats and others who are hell-bent on politicizing this situation indefinitely to reconsider. More and more people (scientists and non-scientists alike) will continue to understand just how ridiculous and immoral these shutdowns really are. Logic will eventually triumph. I believe that it always does. 🐘

Institutional Crisis



Biden Justice Department Will Resume Reprogramming the Police

His administration needs to appease BLM, and the “Biden Crime Bill” and Obama’s “reforms” provide the blueprint.

by Andrew C. McCarthy

The Democrats’ mission is not to defund the police. It is to devour the police. And who better than a Biden Department of Justice to do it?

Once former Vice President Joe Biden was safely declared the winner of the 2020 election, Democrats took a fleeting respite from genuflecting to their young Marxist firebrands and surveyed the down-ballot wreckage. Suddenly, there was pooh-pooing of the notion that anyone actually wanted to defund the police. This news was announced by self-styled “centrist” Democrats, who’d seemed to have lost their voice on that subject while America’s cities burned, our businesses were looted, and our crime rates spiked — and while what passes for the “center” moved about thirty yards leftward on the party’s gridiron.

Naturally, the outraged conservative press was quick to roll the tape. In fact, the AOC “Squad” and its vitriolic imitators, one after the next, were adamant: Not only were they quite serious about dismantling police departments, but they had already taken concrete steps in several cities to slash law-enforcement budgets.

Enter Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, who envisions wielding heavyweight influence in the incoming Biden administration. An “independent,” Sanders has polished his “Democratic Socialist” routine — Democrat when caucusing on Capitol Hill; socialist when speaking on campus, hobnobbing in Hollywood, and campaigning for the likes of Chesa Boudin, the son and foster son of Weather Underground terrorists who is now, of course, San Francisco’s district attorney and paragon of the progressive prosecutor project, for which the moneyed Left has opened its coffers in urban centers across the country. Sanders, aligned with both Team Biden and the

Squad, assures everyone that it’s not that the incoming government supports “defunding the police.” Rather, he says, “What we’re talking about is making police officers accountable.”

If you hear a little voice in the back of your head — actually, a deep baritone voice — saying, “And if you like your police, you can keep your police,” then you’re on to something.

It is not hard to predict what course the Biden Justice Department will take. While there are often reasons to doubt campaign rhetoric, there is no reason to doubt the former Obama vice president’s commitment on the hustings (or was it in the basement?) to revive Obama administration law-enforcement practices. Far from drying up police budgets, Biden’s approach will entail ramping up federal spending to resume the project of reprogramming police on the “progressive” model, under Washington’s watchful eye.

This project is already well underway. Any Trump-era pause was negligible. But there are differences, salient and alarming, that distinguish President-elect Biden’s political moment from Barack Obama’s 2008 ascendancy.

The latter took office with his party in firm control of both congressional chambers. Priority was thus given to landmark progressive legislation: the Obamacare transformation of health care and the Dodd–Frank overhaul of financial regulation. Once cemented in law, these enterprises would prove nigh impossible for Republicans to roll back, no matter how destructive they might be.

Contra 2008, the election of 2020 was a dismal showing by Democrats. Aside from a presidential election that was far from the cakewalk they’d anticipated, the contest brought stinging defeat. Republicans are highly likely to hold the Senate, and they made dramatic House gains that will stifle any ambitious Democratic legislative agenda.

Andrew C. McCarthy is a former federal prosecutor, best-selling author, and contributing editor at National Review.



The Politics of Patrisse Cullors, Founder of Black Lives Matter

A curious mix of Marxism, identity politics, and race and gender confusion.

by Paul Kengor

We actually do have an ideological frame," says Black Lives Matter founder Patrisse Cullors of herself and co-founder Alicia Garza. "Myself and Alicia in particular are trained organizers. We are trained Marxists. We are super-versed on, sort of, ideological theories."

Much has been made of that statement from Cullors, and rightly so. And it's hardly all she has said about the subject. In an April 2018 interview, Patrisse added, "I went through a year-long organizing program at the National School for Strategic Organizing (NSSO), and it was led by the Labor Community Strategy Center. We spent the year reading, anything from Marx, to Lenin, to Mao, learning all types of global critical theory and about different campaigns across the world."

That, too, is hardly the end. Patrisse Cullors has been an open book when it comes to her life and beliefs. In fact, open that book — her 2017 memoirs, *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir*, which includes a foreword by America's most famous female Marxist, Angela Davis, a mentor and inspiration. Even before the foreword from comrade Angela, Cullors's book begins with Marxism. The lead quote on the dedication page is from Assata Shakur, written as poetic verse. The last line echoes the concluding words of Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*:

*It is our duty to fight for freedom.
It is our duty to win.
We must love each other and support each other.
We have nothing to lose but our chains.*

Like Angela Davis, Shakur was on the FBI's Most Wanted List. She was a member of the Black Liberation Army in the 1970s, an extremist offshoot of the Black Panthers. She was convicted in the murder of a police officer in a May 1973 shootout on the New Jersey Turnpike. Guilty of several crimes, she was sentenced for life, but escaped from prison in 1979. She was discovered in Fidel Castro's Cuba in 1984, where she has been hiding and protected ever since. She remains on the FBI's Most Wanted List.

That's how this book begins, with comrade Assata and comrade Angela — the latter a dubious Lenin Prize winner, for which she was feted in Moscow in 1979, and a darling of the Soviet Communist Bloc.

Davis perfectly sets the tone for the memoirs, given that much of what Cullors writes in this book is about sex, gender, feminism, and ideology. Davis's opening paragraph shares



Paul Kengor, Ph.D., is professor of political science at Grove City College in Grove City, Pennsylvania. He is also chief academic fellow at the college's Institute for Faith & Freedom, and a senior editor and regular contributor to *The American Spectator*.

attorney general to file civil lawsuits to "obtain appropriate equitable and declaratory relief to eliminate the pattern or practice."

Here is how the game works. Whenever there is a police-involved incident with racial overtones, particularly if a black male subject has been shot or physically subdued, Black Lives Matter mobilizes, and the Justice Department snaps to, saber-rattling about a possible civil-rights prosecution of the cops. These tend to fizzle out quickly because the police use of force is generally lawful (e.g., the subject has committed a crime, resisted arrest, and/or threatened the officer). Yet, to mollify the agitators (with whom the Obama administration was known to consult), the Justice Department trumpets that it has commenced a "pattern or practice" investigation of the entire police department.

These investigations are extensive and prohibitively expensive to defend against. The feds pore over police reports of arrests, stop-and-frisks, and interviews, searching for traces of racism — and, when they can't find it, resorting to the hocus-pocus of "disparate impact" to infer it. Strapped cities cannot afford to battle the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division and bottomless budget. Plus, Democrat city officials delight in "negotiating" with a Democratic Justice Department to hog-tie the cops.

The result is a consent decree, in which the police are subjected to federal monitoring and training in "community policing." This euphemism connotes the full progressive menu of anti-Broken Windows measures: the police officer reimagined as social worker; a hands-off approach to "quality-of-life" offenses; the easing of anti-gang strategies (targeting gang crime, you see, is just a pretext for surveillance and harassment of poor communities of color); and such alternatives to criminal enforcement as diversion, counseling, family intervention, and "restorative justice" (where the perp and the prey, both victims of our "broken system," meet to talk it out rather than abide all that icky prosecution stuff).

Understand, none of this anti-law-enforcement approach to law enforcement requires an act of Congress. It is all in the category of executive action, governance that President Biden and his Justice Department can impose nationally, without effective oversight by lawmakers — or, for that matter, courts, which can address police excesses but are powerless, when police stand down, to compel faithful execution of the laws.

Will there be pushback against this? Probably some. Sensible Democrats know that their party was punished on Election Day because Americans are frightened by urban unrest, rising crime, and the anti-enforcement fervor that has been embraced by leading Democrats. In many neighborhoods, police have been paralyzed into passivity — those of them, that is, who have not raced to file retirement paperwork. But the money and the energy on the left is with Black Lives Matter and the movement to abolish policing as we knew it in the quarter-century urban renaissance that began in the early Nineties. Biden will need to show them some results, and the Obama years provide the template. ✎

All in all, that is good for the country. But for law enforcement ... not so much.

The prospect of gridlock on Capitol Hill intensifies Biden's need to resort to executive action if he is to appease his party's increasingly hard-left base. And that brings the nation's police departments to the fore. Their summer 2020 siege has made them a soft target, and the formula for neutering them was already perfected by the Obama Justice Department.

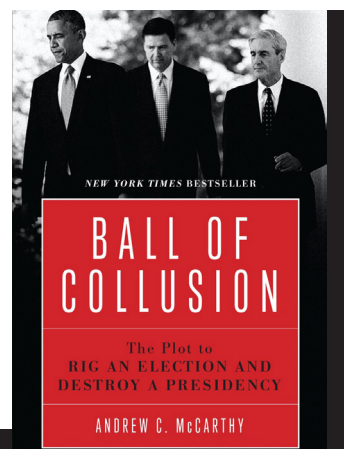
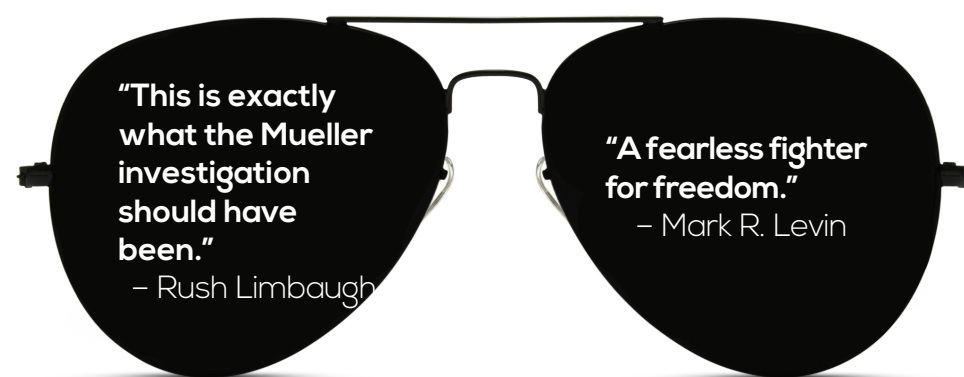
To draw another marked now-versus-then contrast, remember 1992, when Gov. Bill Clinton sharpened his trendy "New Democrat" progressive-but-practical message by returning to Arkansas, even as the presidential campaign heated up, to preside over the death-penalty execution of Ricky Ray Rector. Rector had murdered a police officer but then botched a suicide attempt, resulting in a lobotomy and diminished mental capacity. He became a cause célèbre in the hard Left's anti-capital-punishment crusade. Once in the White House, and egged on by some Congressional Black Caucus members whose cities were ravaged by crack-fueled gang crime, Clinton further burnished his tough-on-crime credentials by backing the 1994 Violent Crime Control and Enforcement Act. It dramatically enhanced federal prosecution and sentencing — but with a catch that we'll come to momentarily.

Ever the weathervane, a notoriously windy Senate mediocrity then chairing the Judiciary Committee also claimed credit for that legislation, ceaselessly referring to it as the "Biden Crime Bill." No more. Thirty-six years later, the Biden campaign disappeared allusions to it from the candidate's long history of ... um ... accomplishments.

Vigorous law enforcement is an evanescence of a Democrat time out of memory. Now, it is a matter of wiping out "antiquated" thinking — serious time for serious crime; "Broken Windows" policing; and proactive, intelligence-oriented enforcement practices. You may remember these as the quaint strategies that ushered in a generation of record-low offense rates and thriving, prosperous cities.

Do you still hear that deep baritone whispering, "The 1980s are now calling to ask for their law-enforcement policy back"? That may be because Obama's portentous "21st Century Policing," accelerated by the progressive prosecutor project, is gradually bringing back the dystopian urban centers of the 1970s. (By the way, have you heard that an eye-popping three hundred thousand people have moved out of New York City during the last eight months of coronavirus lockdowns, racial agitation, attacks on police, and rising crime?)

The prescription for all this stems from that erstwhile "Biden Crime Bill." To appease Democrats queasy about robust enforcement and harsh sentences, Clinton, Biden, et al. tucked in a provision that criminalizes "any government authority" — including state and municipal police departments — that "engage[s] in a pattern or practice of conduct by law enforcement officers ... that deprives persons of [federal] rights, privileges and immunities." Significantly, the law empowers the



her “exciting” take on “Patrisse and her comrades,” on “Black and left,” on “feminist and queer.” Davis revels in the language of the academic Left, whether talking about “Queer Theory” or “intersectionality” or the “intersection of race and disability.” She takes after “white supremacist institutions,” “structural racism,” “racist, misogynist, and transphobic eruptions of violence,” the “global surge in Islamophobia,” the “continued occupation of Palestine” (i.e., by Jews in Israel), “colonialism and slavery.” On the sunny side, she pauses the attacks to commend “comrade Patrisse” for illuminating “a life deeply informed by race, class, gender, sexuality, disability” and for teaching us “how art and activism can transform such tragic confrontations into catalysts for greater collective consciousness and more effective resistance.”

This intro foreshadows exactly where Patrisse Cullors goes with this book and, ultimately, with her organization, Black Lives Matter. As Americans have witnessed clearly over the last year, and especially at BLM’s website, this movement goes way beyond race. If BLM was dedicated strictly to, say, halting police violence and brutality toward black people, then nary a soul would object. I’d personally write checks and put a sign in my yard. But the reality is that Cullors’s vision is a very far-left one. Reading this memoir makes that even more clear than reading the BLM website. And yet, it’s obvious that not enough people have read the book; otherwise there would be a much better understanding of its author.

Speaking of which, I must state emphatically that what Cullors’s memoirs say about the racism she experienced growing up is significant and absolutely merits sympathy. The material on her father and brother is heartbreaking, prompting me personally to pause at times to pray for them as I pushed through their agony in these pages — especially the father, Gabriel Brignac, the kind of guy I knew growing up. Or consider what she writes about her first husband, Mark Anthony, when armed police in riot gear banged down their door, yanked him out of bed, and handcuffed him in the middle of the night with no warrant because he “fit the description.” You understand her bitterness. But it’s harder to understand her intense bitterness toward America across the board, not just on race issues, but everything from health care to unemployment to wages to Abu Ghraib to Vietnam and Korea and the American flag to, well, you name it.

Cullors appears to strongly dislike America, seemingly seeing little to no redeeming value in this country. “I hold the flag that had covered his casket,” she writes of the sad funeral of her father, a war veteran, “this man who died of a broken heart in this nation of broken promises, and I think that if my father could not be possible in this America, then how is it such a thing as America can ever be possible?”

That is a sentiment that millions of black Americans — who constitute the greatest success story of survival, perseverance, and success in U.S. history — would emphatically reject.

As an academic and scholar who studies, writes, and lectures on Marxism and political ideologies, I will focus here on what Cullors’s memoirs tell us about the Marxist ideology that she sadly has chosen to embrace. In that regard, there’s much in this book that’s troubling and even tragic.

From the first pages, one is struck hard by the obsession with identity politics. Hers is not a color-blind, sex-blind, or gender-blind perspective. Everyone is identified if not defined by color, race, ethnicity, sex, and gender. It’s a worldview we all thought we were trying to reverse and look beyond. Following Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., we thought we were supposed to judge people by

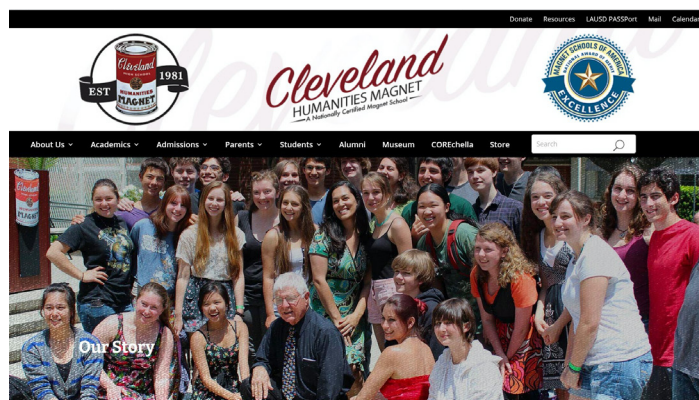
the content of their character rather than the color of their skin. That’s not how Patrisse Cullors sees it. For her, all people fit into a preconceived category. There’s also a politicization of language and style. The word “Black” is in upper case (as is “Brown”), whereas “white” and other non-black (non-brown) identities are lower case. (Also upper case are the words “Gay” and “Queer.” Strangely, the names of certain individuals in this book and in Cullors’s life are spelled in lower case, including her assistant author “asha bandele” and inspirations such as “bell hooks.”) For over thirty years, I have been a copy editor working from Associated Press style guides. You may have noticed that this change by Cullors and BLM is suddenly the dominant style in newspaper and web publishing. The word “Black” is now uniquely upper case.

Through the first four chapters of the book, we learn about Cullors’s parents and upbringing. In Chapter Five, we start to get a glimpse of her leftist ideology taking shape. The key moment was her enrollment in “my new magnum program, Cleveland High,” located in Reseda in California’s San Fernando Valley, a totally different place than the rough Van Nuys neighborhood where she grew up.

The school today goes by the name Cleveland Humanities Magnet. As I write, the home page of its website sports a Black Lives Matter emblem among the Instagram buttons. The “About Us” section features this statement about racial and ethnic diversity:

Staying true to its goal of integration, Cleveland Humanities Magnet takes it to the next level, by ensuring that the program, and the curriculum, also reflects the diversity of the population it serves. As one of the most diverse cities in the world, Los Angeles provides very few opportunities for diverse groups to develop a common community. In this case, Cleveland Humanities Magnet does not “track” students into classes based on their ability levels, since that approach often yields further segregation. Rather, the program maximizes the ethnic and racial diversity of its student body by integrating it as part of the curriculum, respecting and addressing differences in lifestyle and outlook. This transcendence of ethnocentric attitudes is key to the study of the humanities since one must learn about other cultures and other people before learning about one’s own culture. The diverse Cleveland Humanities Magnet student body helps make that possible.

Ironically, that statement is placed under a photo of about thirty students, not one of whom is black:



Cleveland Humanities Magnet website screenshot

Cullors attended the school in the late 1990s and early 2000s and got a heavy dose of leftist indoctrination. “Cleveland’s humanities program is rooted in social justice,” she wrote, “and we study apartheid and communism in China. We study Emma Goldman and read bell hooks, Audre Lorde.... We are encouraged to challenge racism, sexism, classism and heteronormativity.” Readers here are familiar with Emma Goldman, whom Cullors said they “studied and loved” for the “feminist anarchist” she was.

Maybe less known to readers here are “bell hooks” and Audre Lorde.

Hooks, a cultural Marxist, is known for her work on Marxist critical theory, “intersectionality,” race, gender, capitalism, patriarchy, and, as she puts it, “education for critical consciousness.” She has been especially vocal against “white patriarchy” and “homophobia.” Hooks was asked in a recent interview: “In terms of your own political development, would you say that your analysis is informed by a Marxist critique of capitalist society?” She replied, “Absolutely. I think Marxist thought — the work of people like [Antonio] Gramsci — is very crucial to educating ourselves for political consciousness. That doesn’t mean we have to take the sexism or the racism that comes out of those thinkers and disregard it. It means that we extract the resources from their thought that can be useful to us in struggle. A class-rooted analysis is where I begin in all my work.”

Hooks is a star among critical theorists and Marxists focused on culture and race and feminism. Patrisse Cullors writes, “bell hooks continues to be a North Star.”

As for Audre Lorde, who died at age fifty-eight in 1992, she is acknowledged on Wikipedia as “a self-described ‘black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet,’ who dedicated both her life and her creative talent to confronting and addressing injustices of racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, and homophobia.” That is accurate and most assuredly what Cullors took from Lorde.

The Cleveland Humanities Magnet school was fundamental in her formation: “In many ways it was my high school, Cleveland, that saved my life,” she writes. A large part of that was sexual: “And while Cleveland was nowhere near perfect, it offered a pathway for we who are Queer to claim ourselves.” Here she began a life of LGBTQ identity and activism.

Cullors here credits an art history teacher named Donna Hill, with whom she and a close friend lived. Hill became not only an educational guide to Cullors but also a spiritual one. “She teaches us Transcendental Meditation,” Cullors writes. “Donna Hill, a simple, single Black woman with a heart that could carry a universe, becomes my first spirit guide.” (When Cullors says that Donna could “carry a universe,” she might mean it from a spiritual point of view — more on that in a moment.)

Donna Hill also hooked her up with the “Brotherhood Sisterhood social justice camp.” There, she was connected to the single most formative educational center of her life, the so-called “Strategy Center.” Based in Los Angeles, the Labor/Community Strategy Center was created and operated by Eric Mann, a former Sixties radical who did time with SDS, the Black Panthers, the Weathermen, and the Weather Underground. Mann, who is not black but Jewish, did prison time as well, being part of the cadre of domestic terrorists that included Bill Ayers and Bernardine Dohrn. After the Brotherhood Sisterhood social justice camp ended, Cullors joined the Strategy Center, where she spent a year being trained as an organizer.

“I read, I study, adding Mao, Marx and Lenin to my knowledge of hooks, Lorde and Walker,” writes Cullors excitedly about adding these three early communist monsters to her reading list. “I meet and build with Eric Mann, who started the Strategy Center and who takes me under his wing.... I find a home at the Strategy Center, a place that will raise me and hold me for more than a decade.” The Marxist-training center becomes her true home. She says she will “always” remain a part of the center, for the rest of her life.

The next turn left for Cullors was UCLA, where she took up religious studies. There she studied “philosophy with a concentration in the Abrahamic traditions” — that is, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity.

Cullors grew up a Jehovah’s Witness, a group she came to despise, and which helped set her on a bad spiritual path. She rails against the fact that all the Elders in the congregation were men. She denounces the group today as full of “vulgar hypocrisy.” “This is when I begin to hear that Satan has gotten me,” writes Cullors, with no added details as to where she heard that. She left the doors of the Kingdom Hall permanently behind: “I set out to find God, to find my spirit, to find myself.”

Where she went is unconventional.

Recently, a striking video clip emerged from a June 2020 interview between Cullors and Melina Abdullah, co-founder of Black Lives Matter Los Angeles, discussing the role that “spirituality” plays in the movement. She called BLM a “spiritual movement,” and she and Abdullah discussed spirit-raising. “We become very intimate with the spirits that we call on regularly,” Abdullah said. “Right, like, each of them seems to have a different presence and personality. You know, I laugh a lot with Wakiesha, you know, and I didn’t meet her in her body. Right, I met her through this work.” Cullors responded by explaining how she has been empowered by these spirits and how the BLM ritual to “say his (or her) name” is not merely a mantra but also an appeal to deceased spirits.

This spiritual curiosity has been widely discussed online, particularly among BLM critics. But it’s not the first time that Cullors opened up on this subject. She wrote about the faith of her and her “cisgender” husband in her memoirs:

Both of us live in the tradition of Ifa, the African spiritual practice that originated with the Yoruba people of Nigeria at least 8,000 years ago. The tradition is earth-centered and is balanced by these three: Olodumare, Orisha and Ancestors. Our Supreme Being is known as Olodumare and is without gender. Olodumare is benevolent, not the vengeful, angry God I grew up with. Olodumare does not interfere with the affairs of humans. Rather, Olodumare has provided us with a Universe, with all that is needed to create joy and peace — if we so choose it.

In Ifa we believe that all living beings, all elements of Nature, are interdependent and possessing of soul. Rocks. Flowers. Rivers. Clouds. Thunder. The Wind. These energies are called Orisha and it is these Orisha with whom we are in direct contact, whether we know it or not.

In Ifa, we also recognize and believe that our Ancestors are always with us and must be honored and acknowledged. They are part of what both grounds and guides us, and to understand them, we undertake a process of Divination, readings that help us understand that our purpose and destiny are based on the wisdom of the Orishas and the Ancestors.

Cullors appears to strongly dislike America, seemingly seeing little to no redeeming value in this country.

This is her process of Divination, this is her Supreme Being, this is her faith. I will not bother with commentary on this. It speaks for itself.

Thereafter, Cullors's memoirs turn to sex and gender. The final chapters of her book begin to resemble the highly sexual-cultural section of the "What We Believe" portion of the Black Lives Matter website, which has troubled so many people about the group — prior to the site being scrubbed. In fact, her memoirs include a list that would be cut and pasted at the website. They include goals such as these:

- *Honoring the leadership and engagement of our Trans and gender non-conforming comrades*
- *Being self-reflective about and dismantling cisgender privileges and uplifting Black Trans folk, especially Black Transwomen, who continue to be disproportionately impacted by Trans-antagonistic violence*
- *Affirming space free from sexism, misogyny, and male-centeredness*
- *Practicing empathy and engaging comrades with the intent to learn about and connect with their contexts*
- *Fostering a Trans- and Queer-affirming network*
- *Fostering an intergenerational and communal network free from ageism*

And so on. As the book continues to dive deep into the sexual, and particularly all things "Trans," Cullors also describes at length her meeting and marriage to a person named only as "Fortune." This individual is confusedly and repeatedly referred to throughout Cullors's text as "they." I could be mistaken, but I believe this is because Fortune identifies as more than one gender and maybe even as more than one person (Cullors never explains), and thus is repeatedly referred to by Cullors in the plural. A typical passage: "And then they drop to one knee in front of me and say, Patrisse, you are the love of my life. I knew it from the day we met. Will you marry me?" They marry. "Future and I are married." Her final pages go on at great length about Black Transwomen.

Finally, the memoir wraps up with parting political shots, particularly at Donald Trump, "a man who openly campaigned on bigotry, white supremacy and misogyny." Rather humorously, and justifiably, Cullors criticizes Democrats in 2016 for nominating a

loser in Hillary Clinton, "knowing that there could have been and should have been a better candidate."

You got that right, Patrisse!

Such are the politics and ideology of Patrisse Cullors, founder of Black Lives Matter — an organization that is very much hers in body, mind, and spirit.

Looking back, it's clear that Cullors is another victim of the leftist takeover of our educational system. She not only was not taught why Marxism is bad but, quite the contrary, was told it was good. It really is a shame. If there was any true justice in education, not to mention true diversity — i.e., intellectual diversity — she would have learned better.

"Communism has no place for God," noted the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. "I strongly disagreed with communism's ethical relativism. Since for the Communist there is no . . . absolute moral order, there are no fixed, immutable principles; consequently almost anything — force, violence murder, lying — is a justifiable means to the . . . end."

There have been so many great black anti-communists. Today there are the likes of Walter Williams, Thomas Sowell, Bob Woodson, Star Parker, Candace Owens — we could go on and on. There are so many from the past, too, from brilliant black columnists like George Schuyler to maybe the most well-known black anti-communist of his day, Manning Johnson, who excoriated white communists for using blacks as their "Negro lickspittles." Perhaps what Cullors really needs to know about blacks and Marxism is what the founder of the ideology she embraces, one Karl Marx, said about blacks — comments that I've written on at length. Karl Marx was a flat-out racist. He flung around the N-word and described black people as lower on the evolutionary scale and closer to apes. He denounced his partly Cuban son-in-law as "the Gorilla" or "Negrillo."

If Cullors only knew what Karl Marx said about black lives, perhaps she still might call herself a communist, but I doubt she would identify as a Marxist. Of course, there isn't much of a difference, but the leader of an anti-racist movement at least shouldn't take the name of a racist like Karl Marx.

And what Americans of all stripes need to know is that Patrisse Cullors, founder of Black Lives Matter, embraces an ideology that they surely don't share. ❧

IDENTITY CRISIS



'Transwomen Are Women' and Other Polite Lies

Such statements seem accommodating, but they come at the expense of actual women.

by Abigail Shrier

Let me ask you something: Why don't people trust their instincts?" It's a great line, delivered by serial killer Martin Vanger (Stellan Skarsgård) to his tethered quarry, Mikael Blomkvist (Daniel Craig), in the movie version of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. It's a scene I've never been able to shake because it crawls with that relentless electrostatic charge — truth.

Vanger goes on:

You knew something was wrong, but you came back into the house. Did I force you? Did I drag you in? No. All I had to do was offer you a drink. It's hard to believe that the fear of offending can be stronger than the fear of pain. But you know what? It is.

This, more or less, is the predicament in which we find ourselves in 2020. Bit by bit, redefinition by redefinition, we have backed into a room that unsettles us,

Abigail Shrier is a writer living in Los Angeles and author of Irreversible Damage: The Transgender Craze Seducing Our Daughters.

prodded by the fear of causing offense. In the public sphere, we've allowed women to become "menstruators," or "people with vulvas," or "bleeders" — even though we don't really believe these are signal traits of womanhood. Even though we believe women and mothers ("birthing people," as Harvard Medical School's Medical Education recently referred to them) are so much more.

Why, then, do we refer to them in this degrading way? So as not to offend those biological women who identify as something else — as "non-binary" or "transmen." We use "birthing people" and "menstruators" to refer to women, so that transwomen don't feel left out. There are just so many feelings to consider, so much indulgence from our bleeding, um, hearts.

In November 2019, the ACLU piously proclaimed, "There's no one way to be a man. Men who get their periods are men. Men who get pregnant and give birth are men."

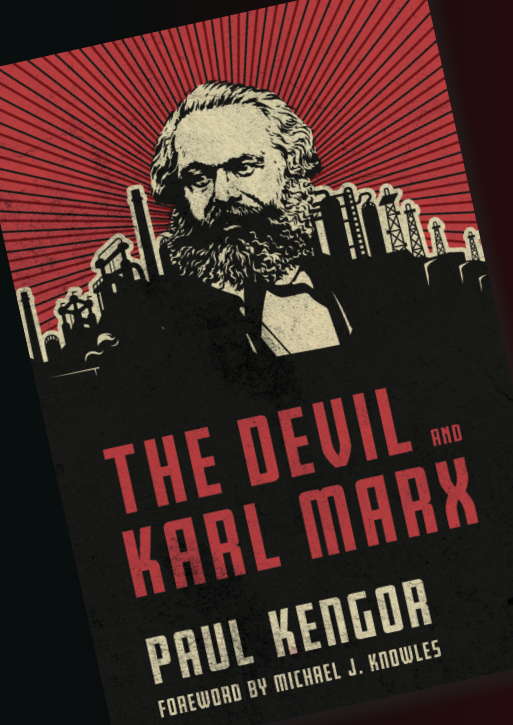
At the time, the announcement seemed unhinged. But one year later, we chuckle and say: *Well, of course they are.* And we recite the most sacred creed of our age:

"Transwomen are women." (Denying this was enough to get Irish writer Graham Linehan kicked off Twitter for good.)

That it's a lie doesn't matter to those who press its acceptance. But it is a lie. Transwomen (biological men who identify as women) do not possess female biology; they are not women.

One might reasonably ask: *If it's a lie, what's the harm of it?* We tell our friends they're beautiful or thin, that they make good points or that they sing well when they don't. One might even say that a thousand white lies are a necessary precondition for a social life, even friendship. If you want to get along in a world of people, where words prick and sting and bruise, it's worth carrying around a balm of minor lies to administer to your loved ones in private.

The public space is different — the lies told there have real, even lethal, consequences. For our democracy to function, for a diverse public to be able to communicate and work together, we must speak in objective terms to which we all have access. We must make points plainly. We must strive toward accuracy so that we may clearly recognize



A penetrating look at the diabolical side of Karl Marx, a man whose fascination with the devil and his domain would echo into the twentieth century and continue to wreak havoc today. It is a tragic portrait of a man and an ideology, a chilling retrospective on an evil that should have never been let out of its pit.

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Transgender athlete Andraya Yearwood at the Connecticut State Open track and field championships, June 4, 2018 (Photo by John Woike. Copyright © 2020 Hartford Courant. Used with permission.)



Believers Gonna Believe: The Young American Transition From Religion to Wokeness

The secular social justice movement has become a bizarre imitation of the traditional faiths it rejects.

by Wilfred Reilly

the issues at stake. We must, each of us, give up some of the private beliefs embedded in our ways of thinking and speaking in order to be widely understood.

For example, when we talk of Jews publicly, outside the walls of synagogues and certain churches, we do not refer to them as “God’s chosen people,” although many Jews believe they are. Nor do we, when engaging a broad, diverse audience, casually proclaim, “Mary is the mother of God.” At risk of offending believers, we say, “*Jews believe* they are God’s chosen people” or “*Christians believe* Mary is the mother of God.” We can all engage with those statements — Christians, Jews, and others alike. We do this to avoid forcing non-believers into silence. We do this to lay bare a set of competing beliefs or interests so that we can subdue these conflicts or arrive at a compromise.

But today’s activist preachers do not say, “Many gender dysphoric men believe they are women” or “wish to be treated as women.” They thump their copies of *I Am Jazz* and insist that transwomen are a subset of women when we know they are a subset of men.

So as not to offend, we’ve gone along with this, submitting our pronouns when asked, like speeding drivers pulled over by cops we must then obey. (Kamala Harris

happily supplies her pronouns in her Twitter bio.) In this way, we assent to the idea that there is no biological means of ascertaining them. And so we find ourselves backed into a world whose unreality unnerves us, divested of the tools we would need to protest.

Once we admit “transwomen are women,” we have no basis for denying transwomen access to women’s prisons. In places like California, male sexual predators who identify as women are gleefully housed with women. Our best female athletes are forced into unwinnable competitions with biological male athletes who, as we’ve already granted, are considered merely another type of girl — without almost any of us ever believing this. Women’s bathrooms and homeless shelters are flung open to a demanding population of biological men, while those too polite to demand truthful language find themselves unable to formulate reasoned objections.

In the public sphere, the lie is the harm. It does damage to our ability to communicate, to comprehend each other, to arrive at solutions or compromises. If it is relevant to point out that a person poised to enter a women’s-only space is a biologically male, we must say so — feelings be damned — because this is a necessary precondition of any sensible discussion of the matter.

Women have been brutalized in jail by biological men who call themselves “women.” Superior female high school runners have been stripped of trophies and records for the sake of biological boys in the state of Connecticut. Girls have been photographed going to the bathroom by male voyeurs who had been permitted to enter the female stalls. All because the lies we swallowed committed us to more lies, and then we could not object, having lost the fixed point from which we might have made our stand. In the end, we managed to confuse ourselves.

None of this is to suggest, of course, that we shouldn’t treat transgender people kindly. On the contrary: it’s unconscionable not to. They are our friends, our neighbors, our family members, our coreligionists, and our fellow citizens. By all means, we should refer to individuals however they prefer in private or in direct communication with them. I do.

But in the public sphere, we must be sticklers for truth. Not out of callousness to others’ feelings, but in order to cleave to objective reality — and to protect the women’s rights that are slipping away. “Menstruators” or “bleeders” or “vulva owners” aren’t worthy of special spaces or protection. Creatures lowly as these hardly seem worthy of mention at all. ✎

A GENERATION OF GIRLS IS AT RISK.

In the last decade, an exceptionally dangerous peer contagion has surfaced. Entire groups of female friends in colleges, high schools, and even middle schools across the country—girls who never experienced any discomfort in their biological sex—are coming out as “transgender” at alarming rates.

And it’s getting worse—between 2016 and 2017 the number of gender surgeries for natal females in the U.S. quadrupled—with biological women suddenly accounting for 70 percent of all gender surgeries.

Wall Street Journal contributor **Abigail Shrier’s** essential book will help you understand what the trans craze is and how you can inoculate your child against it—or how to retrieve her from this dangerous path.

illogical patterns of fanatical misbehavior. Dangerous, extreme beliefs would be far less common in the absence of all that church-house nuttury. In a famous interview with the religious and philosophical site Beliefnet, Harris went so far as to argue that the complete abolition of religion is a societal near-necessity. The transcript of the interview was headlined “Why Religion Must End” and subtitled “A leading atheist says people must embrace rationalism, not faith — or they will never overcome their differences.”

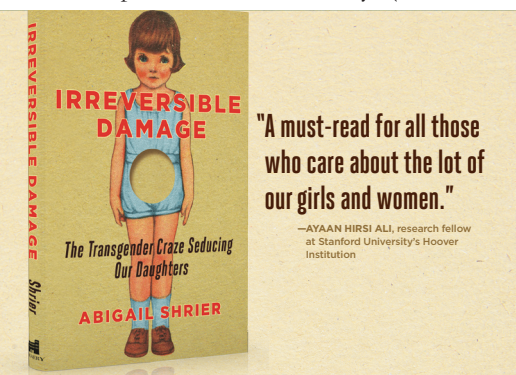
In the interview, Harris — whose work I generally enjoy, by the way — contends that “There is no text more barbaric than the Old Testament of the Bible.” But the holy book of Islam seems to come close: “The Qu’ran, virtually on every page, is a manifesto for religious intolerance.” In the absence of such texts, both Harris and the interviewer seem to believe, humans will be able to “truly figure out moral and ethical behavior on our own, without ... religious concepts,” as the interviewer puts it. This single well-framed sentence was the thesis statement of New Atheism.

Well, it sounded good! But the Brights seem to have ignored something that many political scientists and anthropologists have long known or

suspected: the human urge to believe runs deep, and it’s quirky. It is by no means confined to adherence to the tenets of one of the five or six major traditional religions. The past few decades, during which time we have seen unprecedented expansion of the atheist and agnostic “Nones” category of religious identifiers, have also witnessed the Occupy and Tea Party popular movements, the rise of messianic stem-winding candidates across the U.S. (and global) political spectrum, surges in the popularity of psychedelics and the decriminalization of many drugs across several states, and fanatical, internet-based mass movements such as QAnon and Extinction Rebellion.

Perhaps most notably, these years have seen the rise of the woke “movement for social and racial justice,” an allegedly secular cause which incorporates many of the classic Forms of monotheistic religion: original sin, redemption, saints, shrines, taboos, and the sale of indulgences. This is not an exaggeration, or at least not much of one. Wokeness has a very clearly defined concept of original sin, which can be defined not so much as whiteness or middle-class status — as is often speculated — but as truly liking and supporting the core structures of the current society.

Wilfred Reilly is an Associate Professor of Political Science at Kentucky State University, and the author of Hate Crime Hoax and Taboo: Ten Facts You Can’t Talk About.



Doing so is bad because literally everything is racist (or sexist, fattist, etc.). As Dr. Ibram Kendi, the closest thing the new faith has to a prophet, has argued, *any* system that produces any significant racial disparity in outcomes must by definition be racist. This is because there are only two possible causes for racial disparities: “Either certain groups are better or worse than others and that’s why they have more, or [this is due to] racist policy.” And, since literally every currently operating system, from the annual scoring of SAT exams to the NBA draft in June, produces at least slightly disparate results among human groups, *we know what that must mean!* Our flawed society is the Realm of Maya to the Woke. The equivalent of Midgard. Purgatory. The Fallen World from which the Chosen must attempt to escape.

How can they do so? The answer seems to be what the Buddha labeled “the state of continuous rejection,” and which is more often today called “active anti-racism” or “intersectional critique.” All systems that currently produce unequal racial — or gender, etc. — outcomes should be prodded toward mandated equity. For example, a university might be pressured into jettisoning all admissions tests and letting students in basically by racial lottery. White activists can mitigate the possibility — the certainty! — that they have race-based “privilege” by seeking out potentially dangerous marches or riots and interposing their bodies between protesters and responding police. Interactions between oneself and all members of other cultures should be vetted for power dynamics, so that, for example, a white woman would avoid wearing a Chinese gown to a school dance. To some very real extent, he who is most offended most often comes closest to being blessed.

And it might help to visit a shrine. One of the more remarkable things about Wokeness, conceptualized in religious terms, is how quickly it has acquired martyrs and holy places. Simply put, the martyrs are the victims of racism as defined by the Woke: those killed by any currently operating

system (notably policing) that produces disparate results. Many Black Lives Matter marches begin with a recitation (“saying their names”) of Black individuals killed or injured by police during the past five or six years: Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, George Floyd, Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, Jacob Blake, and so on down the line.

A Google search for “BLM martyrs t-shirt” turns up a nice one featuring most of these names within the first three results. It’s designed by the artist Cubana123098 and retails for \$19.99. And many sites where these individuals fell have become literal shrines: a recent post on the GodTV religious website was headlined “Dozens Baptized, Healed at Minneapolis Site Where George Floyd Died.”

But it can’t be all prayer and peaceful marches. Any faith worth its (consecrated) salt needs unforgiving taboos. Wokeness has them in plenty. In a sentence, the Great Forbidden of the Woke is logically arguing that gaps in performance between groups are due — as they clearly often are — to any factor but prejudice. Of course, all biologically hereditarian arguments for such gaps are clearly taboo. As far back as 2005, the president of Harvard University (!) was fired in large part for opining that small genetic differences between the sexes might account for some of the underrepresentation of women in science.

In recent years, however, even non-hereditarian “culturalists” such as Thomas Sowell and yours truly have faced backlash for making the clearly accurate point that cultural and situational variables like median age, region of residence, and study culture and SAT scores often affect dependent variables such as income more than contemporary prejudice does. The extent to which such heresy is punished can reach the absurd: the longtime play-by-play man for the NBA’s Sacramento Kings was recently fired for tweeting the phrase “All Lives Matter.” The logic for that termination was apparently that noting the large non-Black majority of police shooting victims, or the correlation between crime and police

violence, distracts from the oppression of Black people and must be forbidden.

In addition to, and often as a way to placate, its in-house Inquisition, Wokeness offers what is definitely one of the most fun aspects of any religion — the sale of indulgences! Those familiar with European Catholic Christianity may recall that Holy Mother Church long offered nobles, courtesans, wealthy merchants, and others rather unlikely to give up sinning a chance to quite literally buy their way into Heaven. In immediately pre-Protestant Europe, the cost of forgiveness for a consummated marriage with a first cousin was about \$5,000 in today’s terms. These days, those who sin against Wokery, by succeeding in society or occasionally saying forbidden things, can likewise buy absolution — although usually for a bit more than a few stacks.

Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey, who runs a platform oft criticized for its “problematic” content, recently made headlines for giving \$10 million to Woke prophet Ibram Kendi’s “Boston University Center for Anti-Racism.” The National Football League — burdened with a business model based around big Black and Southern guys knocking each other senseless — recently signed a partnership with rapper Jay-Z’s Roc Nation that will involve spending “\$100 million on social justice outreach” during the next decade or less. And so it goes, down to the mandatory \$29.99 “Black Lives Matter” sign in front of virtually every home or small business in urban areas worried about violent protests.

I had some fun with this piece, and I’m teasing a bit with some of these analogies. But only a bit. Humans have an innate desire to believe, and a recent decline in traditional faith has been measurably followed not just by an upsurge in zany beliefs ranging from QAnonsense to climate apocalypticism but also by a fully formed secular dogma with taboos, high priests, holy places, and even concepts of original sin and the devil. While I blame the Woke for some of this, their rise does give me more in common with Sam Harris’s team: when it comes to this new religion, I am a confirmed atheist. ✖

“I’m in awe of the fearlessness with which Reilly takes on current nostrums on race in his vitally necessary and powerful *Taboo*.”

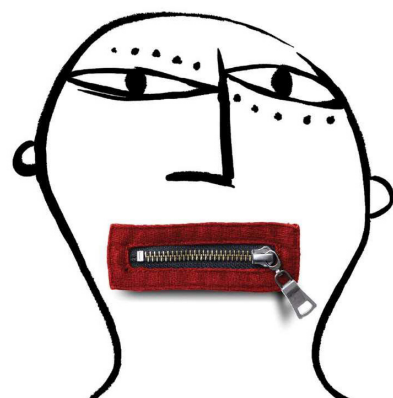
— John Podhoretz,
Editor of *Commentary*

T A B O O

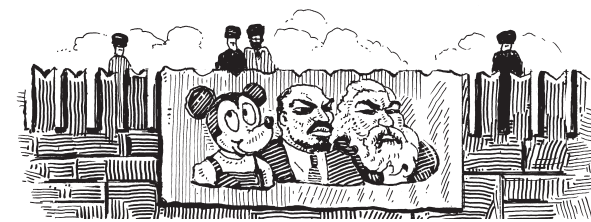
10 FACTS

[You Can’t Talk About]

by **Wilfred Reilly**



NEW SOCIALISTS



The Salt That Has Lost Its Savor: The Woke Church and the Undoing of America

If abortion, infanticide, violence in our streets, election-rigging, and the evils of Marxism aren’t enough to rouse some churches, for what purpose do they exist?

by **Larry Alex Taunton**

When editors at *The American Spectator* asked me to write a column for their exceptional magazine about the liberalization of the American church in the age of Black Lives Matter, Antifa, and what parades as social justice, I liked the idea. My mind had been ranging over that ground for some months, and their call was confirmation that the idea was worth pursuing. But rather than an article addressing that topic in merely impersonal, philosophical terms, I suggested giving it a face: Pastor Timothy Keller.

For the uninitiated, Tim Keller is the founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, a successful confessional church in a place many Christians regard as the heart of darkness. Keller is also a best-selling author who does not shrink from dipping his toes into political waters as so many ministers do. He is something of an unofficial pope to a large segment of the evangelical

Christian population. His influence on this demographic is vast, and he leverages it in books, interviews, and a robust social media presence. For our purposes, the question is this: is it a good influence?

Over the course of his career, Tim Keller has been a light for the Christian faith in the pulpit. He has also written several helpful books. Yet, bizarrely, he has recently embraced the so-called social justice movement. In a series of articles and tweets this year, Keller, confusing Christianity with the Democrat presidential platform, pronounced authoritatively on issues ranging from “systemic racism” to the “corporate guilt” of white America. All of this, of course, was simply a precursor to his inevitable conclusion:

when it comes to taking political positions, voting, determining alliances and political involvement, the Christian has liberty of conscience. Christians cannot say to other Christians “no Christian can vote for...” or “every Christian must vote for...” unless you can find a biblical command to that effect.

Such a position would seem reasonable in, say, the 1916 presidential election between incumbent Democrat Woodrow Wilson and Republican Charles Evans Hughes. But in 2020, a year when Democrats represent all that is unholy? I

can think of several biblical commands that made the choice for any Bible-believing Christian absolutely clear in this election. I mean, would Jesus endorse a radical pro-abortion and pro-infanticide policy; every sordid sexual agenda, even the sexualization of small children; a complete disregard for the rule of law; and open hostility toward His followers? I don’t think so.

Unfortunately, Keller is not an evangelical anomaly. While he was giving theological justification to those who would betray their faith and defect to the opposition with their votes, popular Baptist pastor John Piper was encouraging Christians not to vote at all. In a recent blog post, he maintained that Republicans aren’t morally rigid enough. Whipping out the ultimate tool in the pastor’s mystification toolbox, he employed biblical Greek to add authority to his case against President Trump. (Some pastors love to do this. It is their way of saying, “Don’t try this at home.”) Piper says the president is guilty of “unrepentant sexual immorality (*porneia*), unrepentant boastfulness (*alazoneia*), unrepentant vulgarity (*aischrologia*), [and] unrepentant factiousness (*dichostasia*).”

One wonders how he knows Trump is unrepentant and why he is the one to blame for factiousness. Did the president concoct a Russia collusion narrative? Did he spy on

Hillary Clinton's campaign? Did he illegally use the FBI to push false evidence? Did he do anything justifying impeachment? Did he support the looting, burning, and rioting in our streets? Did he take money from China through a family member serving as a proxy? No. As for his vulgarity and boastfulness, I suggest Piper get out more. Trump is fairly typical of the chest-beating, plain-speaking businessmen one finds in places like New York, New Jersey, Boston, and Philadelphia.

I am reminded of a quotation attributed (perhaps inaccurately) to George Orwell: "People sleep peaceably in their beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf."

Orwell or not, the sentiment is true. Like many of those who do violence on our behalf for the sake of our freedom, Trump is a rough man. That's too much for Piper. Oddly, Piper represents a segment of the evangelical population that demands his president bear the characteristics of a Mother Teresa. Does he make the same demands of his barber, his mechanic, his accountant, or his surgeon? One suspects not.

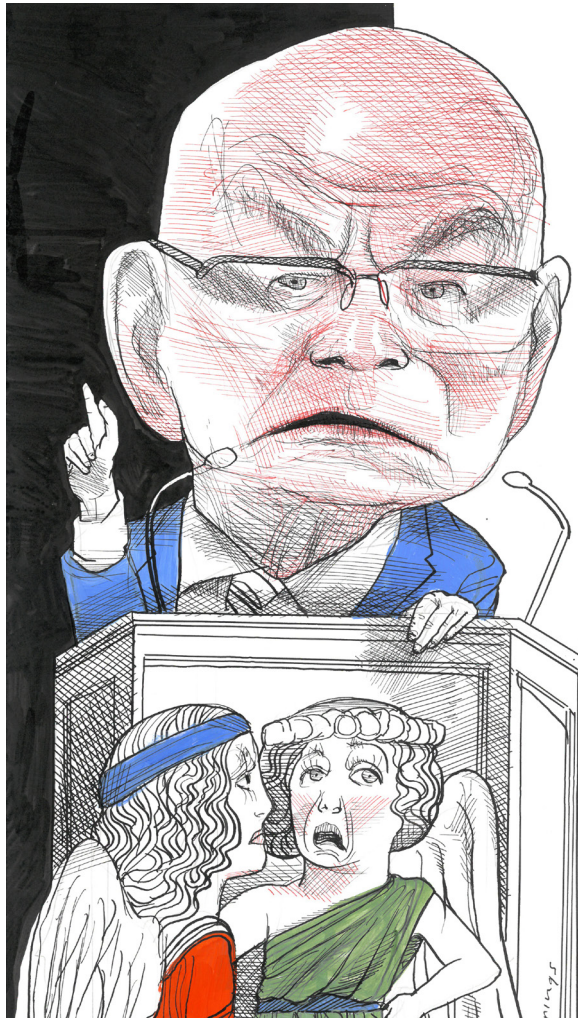
In July 2012, I was speaking at a youth retreat in the mountains of Tennessee when I received a call from CNN. It seemed that Chick-fil-A CEO Dan Cathy had publicly commented on the issue of same-sex marriage, and now the gay mafia was lining up to do both him and his restaurant chain as much harm as possible. Would I, asked CNN, be willing to offer the orthodox Christian perspective on homosexuality and defend Chick-fil-A in this controversy? After reviewing Cathy's remarks and concluding that they were neither outrageous nor biblically incorrect, I agreed to the interview, and later that day I defended the Christian position on the network as vigorously as possible.

Shortly thereafter, former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee called for Christians to mobilize and show their support for the embattled fast food restaurant with "Chick-fil-A Appreciation Day." They did. Lines at the restaurant stretched for blocks. This event marked the first time in modern memory that Christians fought back rather than meekly submitting to the media and special interest bullies.

But not all evangelical Christians were supportive of the Home of the Chicken Sandwich. In an article for *WORLD* magazine, Barnabas Piper, son

of John Piper, wrote that he was against Chick-fil-A Appreciation Day because, he said, it "clearly promote[s] an 'us versus them' mentality." Thus, taking a stand was too divisive.

At the time, I was stupefied by these remarks and wondered how the elder Piper, whom I respected, felt about his son's views. Now I know the apple does not fall far from the tree. Perhaps it had escaped the young Piper's notice, but it *is* us versus them. Besides, Huckabee wasn't asking Piper



Pastor Tim Keller, 2020 (John Springs)

or other Christians to die for their faith. He wasn't asking them to take to the streets and destroy property as protesters on the left so often do. He was asking them to do nothing more than eat a chicken sandwich and some waffle fries for Jesus. Has any protest in history been easier or tastier?

A generation ago, pop star Bonnie Tyler famously asked the question, "Where have all the good men gone?" Since then, the situation has only gotten worse, Bonnie. As C. S. Lewis noted, men in the Western world have largely been emasculated, and men in the Church are

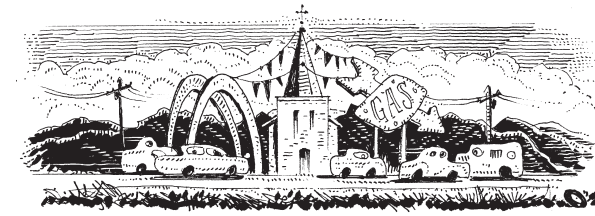
seldom an exception to this decades-long trend. To stand strong for one's faith in Jesus Christ and push back at a culture that, in the words of Isaiah 5:20, "call[s] evil good and good evil" is today seen to be "divisive," "unloving," "bigoted," and "intolerant."

This is because evangelicals in the English-speaking world have confused Christ's command to love others with being civil as if that were an attribute of God. (It isn't.) As a consequence, a superficial, self-righteous, good-for-nothing pietism that prefers tone to truth and style to substance has displaced authentic Christianity in many of the roughly four hundred thousand churches in America. This doctrinal malpractice has given us a generation of men, Christian and otherwise, who are what Lewis called "men without chests."

Don't know the sort of Christians I am talking about? I'll give you a hint. They are the sort who will, upon reading this article, take great offense at what I have written here and waste no time in letting me know it, but are not particularly offended by the sixty-one million children murdered in the holocaust of abortion since 1973, by universities that are incubators of radicalism, by Democrats who are compiling a "hit list" of Trump supporters, or by the godlessness of the Marxism they openly advocate, which has killed no less than 125 million people in the twentieth century alone.

Too many Christians today are risk-averse. They prefer the safety of the family life center to engaging the culture in any way that might cost them something. God forbid they might sacrifice their wealth or comfort, endure the social media mob, or be excluded from the neighborhood barbecue. To such Christians, the "woke" messages of pastors like Tim Keller and John Piper et al. are a justification to do what they were inclined to do anyway: *nothing*.

But that doesn't strike me as Christian at all. C. S. Lewis called Christianity a "fighting religion." Think on that. These days, such a statement strikes a somewhat absurd note with a generation that has never known war, privation, or suffering in defense of anything, much less of noble ideals. For them, Jesus has been reinterpreted to meet a lifestyle preference. One might wonder if they truly know him. Because when Jesus said to turn the other cheek, he did not mean to turn a blind eye. And the highest calling of a Christian is not to be civil; it is to be salt and light. ✠



Canceling Christmas? The Church's Response to Coronavirus

Some struggle online, while others see a calling to serve people in person.

by Jon Gabriel

America's religiosity has long stood out from the rest of the first world. As Europe embraced post-Christianity, the United States resisted it for decades. We believed, we prayed, we attended church. Not in the numbers we used to, but we still stood out from our former brothers across the pond. This continues in the age of COVID.

Although church has remained important, what we meant by "church" has changed dramatically. Fifty years ago, Protestants would spend Sunday mornings in the hard pews of their Methodist, Episcopal, Lutheran, or Baptist church, reading the same scriptures and singing the same hymns.

The old mainline churches collapsed over the years, ultimately leading many suburbanites into non-denominational evangelical megachurches. These new parishes dispensed with ecclesial hierarchy and holy tradition, drifting instead toward "seeker-friendly" sermons and a contemporary "worship experience." The goal wasn't reverence but relevance.

Reinventing an ancient faith every Sunday can be intoxicating, but you lose

a lot in the process. Gorgeous cathedrals were replaced with warehouse-like theaters. Icons and vestments were swapped out for PowerPoints and sports apparel. Who needs candles and incense when you can have synchronized stage lights and fog machines?

This worked pretty well when times were good. If the world around you is stable, every Sunday can host a new multimedia experience. But when suffering enters the picture, stability is necessary. Culture and politics can't provide an anchor in a stormy sea. They bring only more chaos.

The coronavirus hit megachurches hard. Vast assemblies, some meeting in actual sports arenas, shut down. Sermons and stripped-down music were available only via livestream. It's tough enough to get the family up in the morning. After a week of distance learning, kids aren't excited to stare at another laptop on Sunday morning.

Megachurches are thin on tight-knit Christian communities; the anonymity is part of the draw. Still, parishioners watched the Facebook video for a week or two — until something else caught their eye on YouTube.

Since sermons had already devolved into glorified TED talks, why not listen to an inspirational speech from a business leader or self-help guru? If you want music, Hillsong has a nice collection on Spotify.

Wait, Eddie Van Halen died? I'll listen to that instead. Maybe mutter a prayer during his guitar solo on "Panama."

Depending on where you live and what faith you belong to, your place of worship might have been closed since March. A few brave assemblies in blue states defied their government's anti-religious mandates, but those are exceptions. Right now, the culture says church doors should be barred. How can the seeker-friendly pastor defy the culture?

Easter was canceled first, and Christmas will likely be canceled next.

When storm clouds gather, we can look to the past. Christianity was built on suffering, oppression, and martyrdom. By blending into the culture, megachurches didn't prepare their flocks for hostile laws and vicious contempt from the media. In an age of riots, church desecration, and Bible verses labeled as hate speech, "fitting in" is no longer an option.

Post-Christian America doesn't provide a comfortable spiritual life for believers. To stay true to the faith, we can no longer drift with the currents of culture. Thankfully, there's still an anchor to be found.

I hit my limit with megachurchdom a few years ago. I had been a non-denominational evangelical all my adult life, volunteering, teaching, and leading small



Body & Blood, 2020 (Bill Wilson Studio)

groups. I learned from wonderful pastors and leaders who helped me greatly along the way.

But as personal storms engulfed me, I searched for an anchor. I couldn't handle another Sunday motivational pep talk with Bible verses as punctuation. I wanted the narrow way of repentance, sacrifice, and struggle.

Following several years of prayer and study, I was accepted into the Antiochian Orthodox Church in June. This ancient assembly was founded by St. Peter in the first century, in the city where we were first called Christians.

Not much has changed in the intervening two thousand years. We participate in an ancient liturgy, fast about half the days of the year, make the sign of the cross, and all that other jazz I scoffed at for most of my life.

The goal of all this isn't to earn your way to heaven — that's a free gift from Christ — but to conform yourself to Him. Taking up your cross and following Him might not get you a job promotion. It could get you canceled and possibly even killed. That's how the narrow way works.

For the first time in decades, I feel grounded in my faith and surrounded by like-minded warriors — especially during a pandemic. My new church has been attacked

by Roman emperors, Islamic raiders, Ottoman armies, and Soviet communists, but was able to “stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.”

Another thing the Orthodox Church has survived is plagues and pandemics. When coronavirus began to spread outside of China, Orthodox bishops turned to

For priests, there are risks. But you cannot turn away when people are suffering and they need the sacraments.

history. In the eighteenth century, St. Nikodemos gave special sanitary rules to deliver Communion to those sick from plague. Church leaders read about how services were modified in Greece, Russia, and other Orthodox nations during earlier plagues as well.

But what never changed is the ministry. During the Spanish flu epidemic, Fr. Nicola Yanney traveled throughout the midwestern U.S. serving the Eucharist to sick and dying Arab Christian immigrants. He ended up contracting the virus and died in 1918.

“Father Nicola got the flu because he insisted on ministering to people who had the flu,” said Fr. Andrew Stephen Damick, an Antiochian Orthodox priest living in Pennsylvania. “For priests, there are risks. But you cannot turn away when people are suffering and they need the sacraments of the church. You go to your people and minister to them. This is what priests do.”

Many historians tie the early spread of Christianity to the believers' response to the Antonine and Cyprian plagues. As Romans fled the cities, Christians remained to care for the sick. Bishop Dionysius described how his community was “heedless of danger” and “took charge of the sick, attending to their every need.”

Today, Orthodox churches are walking the fine line between obeying governmental authorities and serving the body. In the early weeks, liturgies were live-streamed, but the vast majority have met in person ever since. Throughout, their attitude has remained one of service and sacrifice, not fear or self-protection.

COVID is just another struggle in over two thousand years of struggle. We put the cross on our backs and keep walking up that mountain. Christ Himself promised we will endure hardship; pandemics should be expected. But He also shares wonderful news for the church: the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. ✠



Hollywood: No Man's Land

Only beggarly “male feminists” and posturing macho women survive — barely.

by Lou Aguilar

Where we would be a hundred years later:

“There's an east wind coming, Watson.”

“I think not, Holmes. It is very warm.”

“Good old Watson. You're the one fixed point in a changing age. There's an east wind coming all the same, such a wind as never blew on England yet. It will be cold and bitter, Watson, and a good many of us may wither before its blast. But it's God's own wind nonetheless, and a cleaner, better, stronger land will lie in the sunshine when the storm has cleared.”

The chilling yet touching exchange between Holmes and Dr. Watson at the end of the final Holmes story in the canon, *His Last Bow*, could well describe how the China virus would devastate the Western world. But as America begins to recover,

Lou Aguilar is a published novelist, produced screenwriter, and arts culture essayist. His new novel, The Christmas Spirit — a Yuletide romantic ghost story — was intended as the perfect traditionalist Christmas gift, and is available at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and great American bookstores.

justifying Holmes's optimism, its once-great entertainment industry appears doomed. Empty movie houses can of course be partly blamed on the pandemic, but not entirely. Box-office receipts hit a twenty-five-year low in 2017. It picked up a little last year thanks to Disney keeping it afloat with and without the Marvel Comics Universe, but almost everything else faltered. For Hollywood was diseased long before the virus left Wuhan.

The disease, progressivism, afflicts the mind instead of the body, and the only cure is common sense. But those infected would rather spread the malady like latter-day Typhoid Marys than take the red-pill vaccine. What they don't realize is that their elitist bubble can be quarantined from the outside as well as within — by the entertainment-starved masses that reject everything they stand for. And the most self-destructive thing they stand for is man-hatred.

The erasure of strong male role models from the screen has been quite remarkable, and greatly accelerated in the two years since my first column for this magazine. In it, I used the tenth anniversary of the hit action movie *Taken* to explain why it would not have been

made in 2018, due to such archaic precepts as a paternal hero rescuing his comely teen daughter from Islamic white slavers. Back then it was merely awkward. Today, a white man saving a helpless girl from the brown-skinned villains sexually abusing her would trigger every executive suite in Hollywood. They would not only condemn the story, they'd apologize for it having been produced by one of them in the first place. That regular folks would welcome a similar film today carries no weight with them. Progressivism has warped their brains.

Oh, they'll still make *Taken*-style action films, all right — the formula works fine — but only with a Jessica Chastain as the star instead of a Liam Neeson. Of course they'll lose millions when the fantasy of the gender-constrained Chastain as a deadly assassin outfighting dozens of burly men gets laughed off the screen by the few normal viewers, but that's a small price to pay for peer approval.

Thus the unintended travesty film *Ana* came to be. *Dilbert* cartoonist and best-selling persuasion books author Scott Adams made an invaluable observation on the picture in a recent episode of his popular podcast, *Coffee with Scott Adams*.

It's one of these action movies in which the hero, in this case played by Jessica Chastain, kills lots and lots of bad guys from the beginning to the end... In what other situation do you get a person from one demographic group, in this case a woman, who can slay an unlimited number of people from another demographic group, in this case men, and that's okay?... Has there ever been a movie in which a male hero violently dispatches dozens and dozens, if not hundreds, of female characters? No... And so I ask you this: What is the impact on our youth of watching a female character killing unlimited male characters but never the reverse?... I feel like it's devaluing men, and sufficiently so that we probably ought to ban those movies. I think if we've gone so far ... with this political correctness, you either have to make everything okay, say, "All right, anybody can kill anybody," ... or you have to say ... "I find that unacceptable." And I will boycott any movie that has a female character who is killing exclusively ... male characters as entertainment. Because I'm not sure that's entertainment.

Clearly a large number of viewers would agree with Adams, and are individually boycotting the current anti-male, anti-normal entertainment fare. To which Hollywood mavens respond, "To hell with them if they can't take a woke." They not only dismiss the enormous potential audience, they detest it as a group of Trump-voting rubes. Which they can only do because they have communist China financially watching their backs and supporting their left-wing idiocy.

An industry that long celebrated manly virtue in the face of eternal challenges — love, war, family, crime, business, politics, achievement — now demeans masculinity as toxic and masculine dreams as banal. So a gelatinous Hollywood fool like Seth Rogen can unabashedly blast the American spirit that President Trump tapped into — specifically our desire to boldly go where no man has gone before, into space, the final frontier. Rogen tweeted his contempt for Trump's space program with the standard laptop tough-guy profanity that would stick in his throat if he ever came face to face with a conservative man: "Who in the f**k gives a flying f**k about putting motherf**kers on The Moon and Mars?"

Former liberal hero John F. Kennedy did, as does every man inspired by Jules Verne, Arthur C. Clarke, Robert Heinlein, the Mercury Seven, and Captain Kirk. But for Seth Rogen and his ilk, that was a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away — otherwise known as the United States of America. Hollywood used to be part of it but is no longer. It is now an actual No Man's Land.

For instance, Warner Brothers just signed Patrisse Cullors, a co-founder of the openly Marxist group Black Lives Matter, to a

The fact that regular people will avoid such Warner products like the progressivism plague is of secondary value to virtue-signaling.

multi-year deal across all of its programming platforms. A once-stated goal of BLM in their since omitted "What We Believe" page is the destruction of the traditional family with men as traditional heads of households: "We disrupt the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure by supporting each other as extended families and 'villages' that collectively care for one another, especially our children." According to the Warner press release, the Cullors deal "encompasses scripted and unscripted series, longform series, animated and kids programming." They have to start brainwashing children early, teaching them what a rotten, racist patriarchy this country is. The fact that regular people will avoid such Warner products like the progressivism plague is of secondary value to virtue-signaling.

For most of its history, the men who ran Hollywood clearly delineated the natural order of humanity — men as hunter-gatherers to the point of savagery (gangsters and gunfighters) and women as nourishers and tamers of male excess who brought them back from the brink. But those moguls are no more.

There remain a few biologically male decision-makers in Hollywood, but only the lowest form of the species — male feminists, who have no qualms about humiliating themselves. In a nauseating October video, eunuchoid actor Mark Ruffalo went naked along with Sarah Silverman, Amy Schumer, Tiffany Haddish, and other unattractive semi-celebrity women to urge people to vote. They certainly encouraged my vote — for Trump and against these losers.

While it's too late to save Hollywood, it helps to recognize the class of men who helped build it. I recently came across a picture of four of them — Clark Gable, Van Heflin, Gary Cooper, and James Stewart — at a white-tie New Year's Eve party circa 1956–57. Gable, Cooper, and Stewart are legends. Heflin (*Shane*, *3:10 to Yuma*) was one of the most dependable character actors ever. A decade earlier, Gable, Heflin, and Stewart had abandoned their cushy stardom to risk their lives in World War II combat. Coop tried to enlist but was rejected on medical grounds. Of course there's always ninety-year-old Clint Eastwood, who also served in the Army and celebrates it in his films (*Heartbreak Ridge*, *American Sniper*, *The 15:17 to Paris*), triggering the younger punks in his business.



So when you see the likes of Rogen, Ruffalo, and other emasculated actors lecturing to the rest of us, compare them to their predecessors and laugh at them while avoiding their films. Soon, better men outside the Tinseltown quarantine, immune to progressivity, will take their place. And they will have great stories to choose from that Hollywood left on the table — such as about male heroes and romantic heroines. Then, when the storm has cleared, a cleaner, stronger movieland will lie in the sunshine. ☀

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Can Minneapolis Make a Comeback?

The twin forces of riots and COVID threaten to crush the city.

by John Hinderaker

For five days and nights following the death of George Floyd on May 25, the city of Minneapolis was the scene of riots, arson, and looting. A two-mile stretch of Lake Street, located twenty blocks south of downtown, was almost completely burned. Local politicians' reactions to the riots were sympathetic: officials expressed solidarity with the rioters' concerns, the Minneapolis Police Department's Third Precinct station house was abandoned to the rioters, and force adequate to end the violence, in the form of the National Guard, was not used for several days.

Minneapolis's City Council responded to the Floyd riots by vowing to defund the city's police department. Lacking legal authority to do that, the Council passed a measure that would put defunding the department on the ballot at this year's election, an initiative that the city's Charter Commission mercifully tabled. Nevertheless, retirements and disability

claims have significantly reduced the police department's manpower. A group of Minneapolis residents, mostly black, have sued the city, alleging that the number of police officers has fallen below the legally required minimum.

In the three months after the riots, there were forty homicides in Minneapolis, an increase of 150 percent over the average of the previous five years. Violent crime of all types spiked, and gunfire was reported at dozens of locations around the city.

Then, on August 26, rioters attacked the Nicollet Mall, the heart of downtown Minneapolis. The Target store on the ground floor of Target Corporation's headquarters was sacked. Arsonists burned

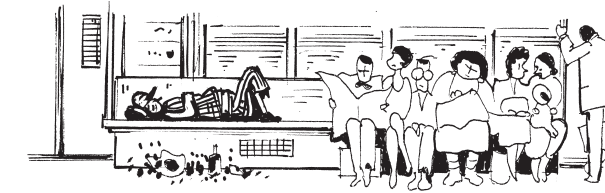
a popular bar. Looters smashed the windows of department stores and walked out with armloads of merchandise. Law enforcement was more or less absent. Since then, an uneasy peace has settled over the city, while crime continues at elevated levels.

Liberal neighborhood groups in the city initially pledged not to call the police in response to crime, sharing the view of the president of Minneapolis's City Council that calling 911 "comes from a place of privilege." But reality eventually intruded, and the Council summoned the city's Chief of Police, demanding to know what he was doing about rising crime. Most recently, the city is contemplating bringing in officers from the Hennepin



Minneapolis businesses boarded up, Nov. 13, 2020 (Allison Payne)

John Hinderaker practiced law for forty-one years and now is President of Center of the American Experiment, a Minnesota-based think tank. John co-founded the web site Power Line in 2002 and has appeared as a commentator on NBC, CBS, Fox News, CNN, CNBC, and Sky News Australia, and is a frequent guest and guest host on national radio programs.



A Tale of Two New Yorks

Manhattan's laptop class diverges from those in the boroughs bearing the brunt of the pandemic's effects.

by Karol Markowicz

New York is alive. After months of death and despair, sealed into our homes with the silence of the city broken only by the sirens, we emerged to sunny weather, somewhat opened restaurants, and a city blossoming. If you squint a little. It's true that there's so much that's beautiful in New York City this fall. There's music in the streets. Turn a corner and hit a string quartet on a stoop. A jazz trio in the park. A trumpet player on the corner.

The outdoor dining is gorgeous. Let's keep it forever, New Yorkers say!

But all of this is an illusion, a distraction from the deep problems the city is facing.

Every week, an iconic restaurant closes its doors. Central Park's Boathouse restaurant, Grand Central Station's Oyster Bar. Colandrea New Corner in Dyker Heights, a restaurant that made it eighty-four years in this crazy city but couldn't survive this one. The outdoor dining is already getting questionable. Heat lamps and coats will be needed before too long.

Karol Markowicz is a writer in NYC. She can be followed on Twitter: @karol.

The music is in the streets because it's largely not allowed to be anywhere else. How these musicians will make their living is a big question mark.

Schools are on extremely shaky ground. New York City was the first major city to open schools for any in-person education. Of course, New York City only did this after two delays, which drove parents entirely insane. In-person education is happening on a part-time basis and closes at the first sign of any uptick in cases.

In October, the mayor and governor closed schools in parts of Brooklyn and Queens despite the fact that the schools hadn't had any cases. It's crazy-making. It leaves parents unable to focus on their own work. It's hard to quantify what that means for our productivity, and it's certainly bad for our children.

And then there's the crime. For every politician who has ever described New York as a tale of two cities — and Mayor Bill de Blasio did just that when he ran for mayor in 2013 — it's never been more true than right now.

The comfortable set, the people who continue to get paid while they work

from their laptops at home, largely live in neighborhoods unaffected by the giant crime spike. They take pictures of the park musicians and post videos of the outdoor dining to say, "See, everything is amazing in NYC."

Through August 31, there was an 87 percent year-over-year spike in shooting incidents. There were 152 shooting incidents in September alone, a 127 percent increase compared to September 2019. Police, mistreated and harassed, are retiring in record numbers.

But the Instagrammers posting their lattes in idyllic parks don't live in the parts of the city seeing this crime uptick. It's not a big deal, some argue. The murder rate is about the same as it was in the waning days of the Rudy Giuliani administration. But, as a police officer friend pointed out to me, reversing twenty years of low crime in eight months shouldn't be something we celebrate.

The Instagrammers also don't live in the areas that are hurting from the continued closures. In fact, when schools closed in October in a large swath of Brooklyn and parts of Queens, the attitude from many was that *those people* deserved

Many wonder when, if ever, downtown Minneapolis will be restored to its former vitality. Office buildings now stand empty, and local businesses seem to have little interest in bringing their employees back to the city. Target Corporation has announced that it will not bring employees back to its corporate headquarters until June 2021 at the earliest. Piper Sandler, a major investment bank, is publicly reported to be mulling a move out of the city. Some smaller companies have already announced that they are leaving the city for suburban or other locations, and a recent survey by the Downtown Council identified forty-five businesses that are either no longer considering moving to downtown Minneapolis or are looking to leave.

There may be worse yet to come. Leasing companies reportedly are predicting that as current leases expire, or termination clauses can be invoked, there will be a massive exodus from Minneapolis office buildings.

Throughout its history, Minneapolis benefited from business leaders who were actively engaged in civic life and who played the leading role in driving economic development. But times have changed. The current generation of business leaders are, for the most part, not natives, and are not disposed to get involved in public affairs in any way that could be deemed controversial. Thus, the city's business community has been virtually silent in the face of a crisis that has both public safety and economic dimensions.

Will Minneapolis recover? Not under its current leadership. The city's experience over the last six months demonstrates the inadequacy of feel-good liberalism to deal with serious issues of violent crime and economic stagnation. Unless Minneapolis's residents are willing to vote for a different sort of leadership in next year's city elections, little is likely to change.

economic growth. The area persistently loses middle- and upper-income residents to other states, while attracting low-income residents. Rioting, looting, and arson — and, perhaps worse, a perceived inept response to those crimes by city and state officials — can only accelerate that demographic trend.

A more immediate concern for the city might be a drop in convention business. Once the COVID situation improves enough to resume meeting in person, it is hard to imagine event planners around the country choosing Minneapolis for their annual meetings or sporting events. According to Meet Minneapolis, conventions and sporting events such as the Super Bowl attracted 34.5 million visitors in 2019, supporting 37,091 jobs and adding \$8 million to the city's tax coffers. The city also relies on hospitality taxes to pay the debt on major infrastructure projects such as Target Center and the Minneapolis Convention Center. Massive drops in revenue from these sources will start a domino effect on city resources that won't get better until the city's reputation improves enough to attract future events.



Minneapolis street view, Nov. 13, 2020 (Allison Payne)

County Sheriff's Office and the Metro Transit Police to supplement the city's depleted police force.

Today, Lake Street remains a burned-out ruin. It will take around \$500 million to rebuild the destroyed blocks, and there is no apparent source for that kind of money. Downtown Minneapolis is a ghost town where the homeless outnumber businesspeople and shoppers. Crime isn't the only reason, of course — many businesses had already begun working remotely before the May riots. But COVID doesn't explain the boarded-up storefronts along Nicollet Mall or the reluctance that many feel to set foot in the city.

Polling by the Center of the American Experiment in September found that the riots and the crime that followed have made a deep impression not only on residents of Minneapolis, but across the state of Minnesota. For the first time in such surveys, the state's residents identify "personal safety" as their number one concern. Of those who listed safety as their top concern, 54 percent said they have little or no confidence in current state and local officials. And 72 percent of non-Minneapolis residents said that if the city's police department were defunded, they would be less likely to enter the city to eat dinner or attend sports events and concerts.

Today, Minneapolis's future is very much in doubt. Over the years, the city's reputation as a desirable place to live, based on low crime, a progressive business environment, and a culture friendly to families, has helped to make up for what many see as a less-than-optimal climate, featuring long, cold, snowy winters. But that positive image has been badly damaged by the riots that were televised into homes across the country, and reputations once lost are hard to recover.

The city's economic situation is troubling, as well. In recent decades, the Twin Cities metropolitan area, of which Minneapolis is the business hub, has experienced below-average

it because they don't wear masks. Much more likely is that the small uptick in cases happened in areas where essential workers live. At its peak, COVID-19 hit the outer boroughs far more than it did Manhattan for just that reason. There are workers who can't stay home and still get paid. Those people live deep in the boroughs, use public transportation daily, and bear the brunt of the pandemic's challenges. There's no reason to expect future spikes won't be in the same places.

The two cities rarely meet, so the illusion that all is well is maintained.

The future of New York City is similarly muddled. Large companies have signaled they won't return workers to the office for some time. Google, American Express, and many banks have let their employees know they can continue working remotely until summer 2021. The obvious concern is that companies won't be renting new commercial space for the foreseeable future.

But residential real estate is also in trouble. Why pay New York City rent if much of the city remains in some form of lockdown? Broadway isn't opening until summer 2021. There are no concerts or dance clubs. Bars and restaurants close at 11 p.m. This isn't the city that never sleeps. May as well pay Peoria rent and collect a New York City salary while waiting for New York City to come back. Or be far away when it ultimately doesn't.

Can New York City be New York City without the electricity of a city on the move? It's unlikely. Packed subways, crowded restaurants, the things that always seemed odd to non-New Yorkers, were a feature, not a bug, of living here. It's hard to see us being that again.

We're New York Strong, our governor assures us. We're going to make it, New Yorkers tell each other. Some will, yes. It just depends on which "we" you mean.



NYC From the 23rd Story, 2020 (Bill Wilson)



Retrofitting the Suburbs

COVID has people decamping from cities. How will this change our way of life?

by Clive Aslet

Let's look on the bright side. As someone whose home is in the center of London, I have to admit that cities have become much more pleasant to live in since lockdown. There's less noise, less traffic, less pollution. Same in New York. "You can hear the birds singing," says the architect Tom Kligerman of Ike Kligerman Barkley. "Walking through Midtown, I saw the streets strewn with pink petals from the trees. It shows what a city could be." Unfortunately, as both Tom and I have discovered, there's not the same point in being here. No theater, no opera, no fun. Everyone who has a second home in the country has decamped, leaving, as one restaurant owner complained to me, "only scumbags who complain about the service charge on a cup of coffee, when they've been sitting on my chairs and waited on by one of my staff." Although the restaurant is long-established and has always done well, it will probably be forced to close, unless there's an unexpected change to the COVID rules and a more understanding attitude from the local authority. They used to say it's grim up north. Now it's gloomy down the metropolitan southeast.

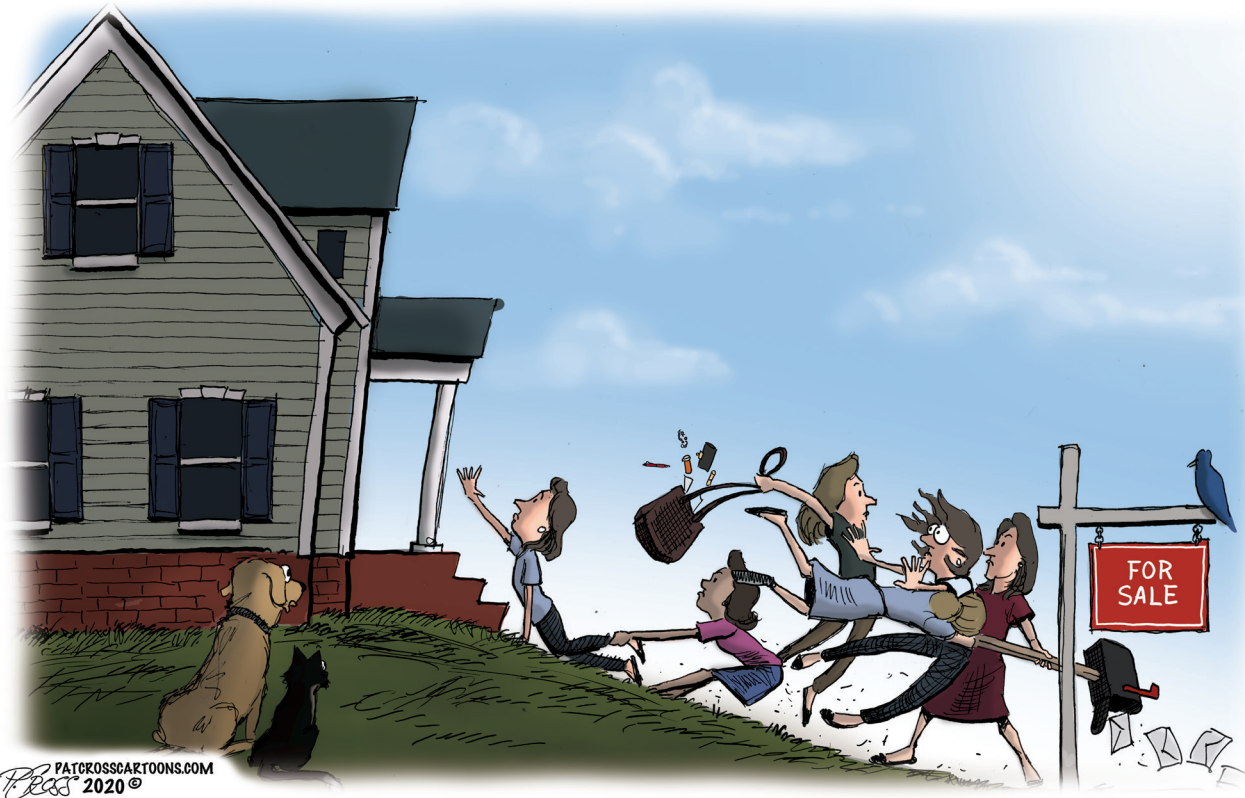
Across the world, buyers have been stampeding into the country property market. Around New York, what were already dizzy prices on Long Island and elsewhere have gone stratospheric. One buyer, I'm told, has purchased a home for \$50 million, simply for the site. The existing building will be torn down and replaced in the style of the modern billionaire, perhaps doubling the spend. A recent article in Bloomberg Wealth revealed that prices in Greenwich, Connecticut, this summer were nearly three times what they had been a year before. In England, the architect Hugh Petter of ADAM Architecture says he's "never been busier." Hugh works at the high end of the country house market, but it's the same at all levels. The other day I was walking the bounds of a Gloucestershire village with

one of the inhabitants, a keen archaeologist. As we stomped through ancient woodland, looking for prehistoric burial mounds, he gave an update on the more recent history of the parish. Before COVID, there were six or seven properties on the market. "Whoosh, they've all gone. To Londoners, and a couple of them doctors." Clearly a doctor would know when it was a good moment to bail out of the capital, and this couple have jumped.

This is doubly remarkable because, before March, the countryside had fallen behind. Under the old-fashioned model, dating probably from the era of the burial mound, economic activity in London would stimulate prices to rise in the capital, then the effect would then ripple out to rural areas, as residents of Fulham took advantage of the difference in value, sold up, and bought country houses in Hampshire. Since 2007, this hasn't happened. Nervous about their financial prospects, young families — usually the ones to move out — clove to the capital. Besides, London was doing too well. The party was too exciting to leave. Foreigners kept piling in. You'd be mad to sell up and rusticate, because London prices would keep rising, your country cottage wouldn't keep pace — you'd never get back in. Now it's the other way around. London prices are tottering. Some of us take a wry pleasure in knowing that the luxury towers for Asian buyers that have been disfiguring the skyline won't sell, bankrupting the speculators behind them. But in rational moments, that seems scant consolation.

It is a global phenomenon, fueled by not only the pandemic but similar issues affecting the property market around the world. It's difficult for young people to buy in cities. Now out-of-town places that they might not previously have considered, given the great time they were having, look more possible. Their friends are doing it. Besides, despite the price rises seen in these volatile months, many country and suburban homes are within their budget. Which is something that, even now, can rarely be said of prime real estate in a major city.

Clive Aslet is author of Old Homes, New Life, published by Trighph Books.



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For life in general, this augurs well. Fortunately for me, my work rituals don't involve catching a commuter train first thing in the morning: I need do no more than stagger from my bedroom to the study on the floor below. When I do commute, boy, do I feel badly treated by the world. Do you know how unpleasant it is to be rammed against other human beings, unable to read a newspaper without elbowing a fellow passenger in the nose? Well, possibly you do because many workers have to undergo this torture every day. It may just about be worth it for the high earners, who can go home to a beautiful home in the evenings, having perhaps taken in a show after work. But for the people working in accounts, who can derive no benefit from the capital because shows are expensive and they must hurry home to somewhere that isn't that great, it's misery. Expensive misery, given the cost of a season ticket, at that.

There's no point in someone like that having to slog into an office every day. Of course, some people in accounts do have to slog in: I have been surprised to discover how many payment runs cannot be made unless people are physically on the office computer — or is that only the excuse I am given when chasing fees? Most things can be done from home. Let's not go into the pros and cons of home-working: suffice it

to say that, say, coastal towns that potentially offer a good quality of life — time to go sailing at the end of the day, friendly faces behind the checkout coronavirus screen — ought to do well. We have a holiday place in Ramsgate, on the south coast. It has been struggling to get back on its feet after a difficult twentieth century (too close to France during the Second World War, then the closure of the Kent coal mines in the 1980s, coinciding with the collapse of the British holiday industry) and has only so far succeeded in attracting a boho crowd who have brought color but not prosperity. Places like Ramsgate might appeal to

Across the world, buyers have been stampeding into the country property market.

a wealthier crowd who can admire the famous Sands for three days a week and go into the office, by the superfast Javelin train — an hour and fifteen minutes, soon to go down to an hour — for the other two.

Ramsgate is what the *Journal of the American Planning Association* would call a “gateway community.” It is a small town near something pleasant — in this case the beach. We bought our place there because prices were cheap. That fact has been noticed by a crowd of artists, creatives, and escapees from London, which gives it a scruffy charm. A study published by the *Journal* recently calculates that there are around fifteen hundred Ramsgates across the United States: towns of fewer than twenty-five thousand people, each within ten miles of a national park, monument, forest, lake, or river, and some way from a major city.

Even before COVID, people had started to notice that these were nice places to live and it was possible to work remotely from them. Now, suddenly, they've become the flavor of the month. These will be the new boom towns as buyers who were previously chained to city or suburbs break free.

Be warned: this movement, which promises so much for improving the general quality of lifestyles, won't be popular with the folk already living there. We've had the same

thing with pretty villages in Britain. You might have thought that locals would be pleased to see their homes increase in value, while benefiting from the superior *savoir faire* and improved coffee shops brought by the incomers. Doesn't work like that. They only see their children being unable to afford a cottage where they grew up and a lot of rich aliens who don't join in with quiz night or the village fête.

The resentments can be intense. There was a time when Welsh activists burned second homes owned by people outside the Principality. Holidaymakers to Cornwall are greeted by homemade signs reading “English Out” — although geographically part of

England, locals see themselves as Cornish first. Norway attempts to preserve rural life through a Concessions Act that requires property buyers to live full time in their new homes, unless they are able to obtain a concession. In England, the problem may have been unintentionally solved by the dire quality of broadband in rural areas, which made my Zoom call to an ecologist locked down in the Yorkshire Dales National Park last week such agony. I don't know what internet speeds are in Sandpoint, Idaho, one of the Zoom towns identified in the report, being situated on a lake and near a popular ski resort. If it's bad, locals might want to keep it that way.

And it's not just cute rural settlements that are getting busier. When I drive home to London on Sundays, the route takes me through outer London; these parts of the city are not overburdened with charm. But unlike posher areas like Belgravia, they're heaving with life. These are the places where most people live, and they're sticking to them. Before March they would have gone somewhere else, I suppose; but since the world has stopped moving, they stay home. Which for the while doesn't look great, unless you like derelict street frontages and for some reason a large number of barber's shops. But is it too Pollyanna-ish to imagine this could change, providing the altered behaviors of pandemic-time don't prove short-lived?

Urbanism is the science of planning towns. Wisdom used to have it that, for this to be done well, people should be encouraged to live in cities. Only when there was a sufficient density of population would neighborhoods achieve those things people love: shops and offices only a walk away from where people live, genial streets where you greet your neighbors, good local services. Urbanism is a child of the Eighties, pioneered at Seaside, a town on the Florida Panhandle, by Duany Plater-Zyberk and picked at Poundbury, outside Dorchester in England, by Prince Charles. This thinking has now swept the board, though you wouldn't always know from the brouhaha that Poundbury continues to create in the retardataire architecture press. Every good architectural firm, Modernist or traditionalist, thinks the same; it's just that the buildings on the streets look different. They all want to celebrate the character of Tuscan hill towns or London's Marylebone — take your pick — whose buzz and attractiveness comes from the density of population.

Wake up, guys. There's a new world out there. People now want to live in the suburbs. What should happen is that a conurbation like London will develop many smaller centers, away from the big center. The big center will still have the arts venues and high-end restaurants that can't be sustained locally; but smaller centers in the suburbs will have more of what the suburbs lack now — something to do. I know what I'm talking about. I grew up in a suburb. It was green and pleasant, and, looking back on it, I can see

why it suited my parents. To their generation, the city was soot-blackened, unhealthy, evil. To me, London was glorious. I went to live there as soon as I could.

It won't be easy to achieve this revolution in the suburbs. But a recent interview in the *New York Times* has introduced me to the concept of “retrofitting suburbia”: June Williamson and Ellen Dunham-Jones have written a book about it. I like the idea. Unfortunately their cases — such as Mueller in east Austin, Texas — tend to be new developments that have been placed in suburban locations: Mueller is on the site of a former airport. It's walkable, which is remarkable for Texas; but it could have happened anywhere, really. My solution is simple. Incentivize developers to replace shopping malls with homes. Malls are made up of low-rise sheds, surrounded by acres of car park: what an extravagant use of land. Redevelop them with proper streets, with terraced houses, parks, trees — you could still have the shops on the ground floor, cars underground. This would be good for Britain and even better for the United States. After all, “Suburbia is the United States. Suburbs are us,” says Ms. Williamson.

COVID has made people reconsider their homes, having spent so long in them. It's time they should rethink the larger environment, too. This should be part of the great rebalancing of the West, post-COVID. London might not regain its fizz, but it will make for a happier world. ✨





On the Trail With Ronald Reagan

Dutch's myth lives on in western Illinois.

by Nic Rowan

Whenever I ride that long, flat stretch of Illinois between Chicago and Davenport, I can't help but think of Ronald Reagan and the time that he hitchhiked the highway now named for him.

It was the fall of 1932, and the depth of the Great Depression. Reagan, after thumbing a ride to Chicago from Eureka, where he had graduated from college, had just failed to become a radioman. It was raining, which is intolerable in the Windy City. So Reagan did what so many broke people did at the time: he bounced right back home.

Back home to Dixon, to his parents. Reagan, of course, did not last long in Illinois after that. He soon found a sports announcing job in Iowa. He leveraged that into a screen test while on a reporting trip to California. Producers liked that fresh, all-American face, and signed him on to be a star. Then came politics. We all know the rest of the story from there.

And yet, Reagan's time in Illinois remains one of the most fascinating parts of his life. The state may be the Land of Lincoln, but the Gipper is its only native son. When Reagan talked about home, he meant the corn flats that roll right into the Mississippi River.

Reagan's legacy in Illinois lives on as myth. The state legislature in 1999

created a trail dedicated to his itinerant childhood, tracing its way through every town to which his alcoholic father dragged his family. Reagan was at the time the only living president to be honored in such a way (though, admittedly, he had been dead in the public eye since his 1994 Alzheimer's diagnosis). The trail cuts through thirteen towns, some where Reagan stepped, some where he slept, and some with no discernable relationship to the president at all.

After more than twenty years, the trail's glory has dimmed. The signs are still on the highway, and the statues still line the streets, but the shifting tides of state politics turned the legislature sour on Dutch. The governmental body responsible for the trail was dissolved in 2016, and its care was entrusted to Eureka College, whose staff will still point a curious traveler in the right direction.

I was that curious traveler just days before the presidential election. Weighed down with a camera and a suitcase full of biographies, I landed in Chicago on Halloween, rented a car, and drove out into the Land of Reagan.

Reagan, if he had to name a hometown, would always say Dixon. Only a two-hour drive from Chicago, the place is generally accessible to tourists, except during the pandemic. Still, most of the old haunts are there: his so-called boyhood

home, the library where he studied, and the school he attended. The city over time has erected a number of statues to him, as well as one to Lincoln, who served in the Blackhawk War in Dixon.

I stopped in front of a Reagan statue downtown just as the sun was setting. It's a strange piece: he's examining several kernels of corn, which the inscription on the base says "seems appropriate" to the miles of cornfield surrounding the town. A couple pulled up and got out of their car. The man, elderly, retired, told me that they drove out for a Saturday cruise through the fields and, as fate would have it, ended up in Dixon.

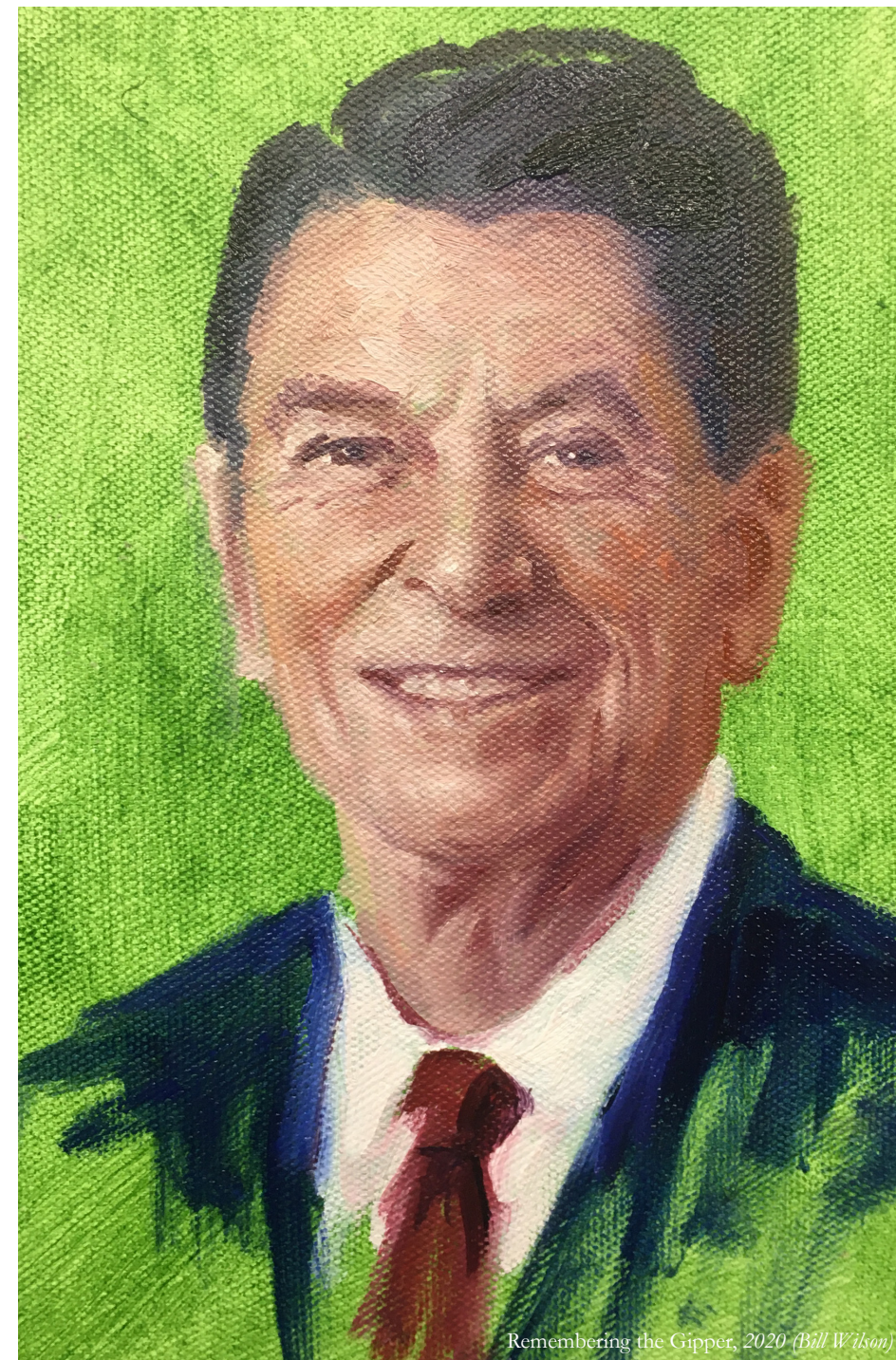
"I've always wanted to retrace his footsteps," he said, pointing to the statue. "He was a good president."

The Reagan sites in Dixon draw more than ten thousand visitors per year, and the town is also a popular wedding destination because of its scenic placement on the Rock River, where Reagan as a lifeguard in high school famously saved seventy-seven lives over the course of several summers.

But Dixon is not the primary Reagan site. That's Tampico, a tiny town about half an hour away, where the president was born. Tampico is not directly off any highway and is not in an area with decent WiFi reception. But it's where Reagan came from, and where its lifelong residents keep watch over his legacy.

In Tampico, I met Joan Johnson, who grew up in the town and keeps the museum at his birthplace running. Johnson inherited stewardship of the place from two other couples in town, the Nicelys and the McElhineys, both of whom were collectors of Reaganomania as he rose from actor to governor to president. Paul Nicely, who, while he lived, poured his entire life's savings into the museum, first showed Reagan the place in 1976, during his first presidential run. In 1992, Helen Nicely led Reagan on another tour, when, in a fit of nostalgia, he desired to see his birthplace once more before his death.

But the Nicelys and the McElhineys are gone now, leaving their cache of knowledge to Johnson, who has been leading tours since 2005. Every year she welcomes several thousand visitors from around the world (she showed me a sign-in book with names from



Remembering the Gipper, 2020 (Bill Wilson)

places as distant as Florida and Russia) and leads them through the museum and Reagan's reconstructed apartment on the floor above.

"I never thought of our family as disadvantaged," Reagan wrote when looking back on Tampico. But to the visitor, it's clear that he was. Reagan was the last president to grow up in an apartment without running water. The communal outhouse is in the back alley, and, with the wind whipping across the plains, I can't imagine there was any comfort in using it.

The birthplace, more than just a museum, is a shrine for people who feel like they have been touched by Reagan's spirit. It's chalked full of mementos visitors have left behind. The most striking, a handwritten sign from a man named Tom Liebel, thanks Reagan for liberating Europe in the Cold War.

"You are the greatest president the world has ever seen," the sign reads. "You freed my country, Hungary, and the world from leftist freeloading barbarians. Your name alone will strike



Nic Rowan covers religion and politics for the Washington Examiner.



Confessions of a Sports Dropout

The Left infects sports — as it has everything else. Will the disease be fatal?

by Larry Thornberry

Will Sunday afternoon football fans ever see an NFL player wearing a Blue Lives Matter jersey? Sure they will. The day after they spot a Volvo with a gun rack.

Here's another question, suitable for the next office pool or pub quiz: Can you name three things in America the political and cultural Left hasn't badly damaged, taken the fun out of, or totally ruined?

All right, I hear your objection, and it's sound. I've set the bar too high. OK, name one thing. Still a challenge. Perhaps there'll be no winner of this pool. An aggressive and intolerant Left has marched, inexorably, through our institutions, taking them down *seriatim*, leaving their forms standing but refiguring and debasing their content, in the manner of ideological body-snatchers.

It took a good while for the Left to capture sports, or at least to badly infect them. Other institutions were less of a challenge. Academe, always a flakey precinct, was easy. The professoriate, merely dotty before the revolution of the Sixties but possessing no BS immune system, morphed with barely an objection into the leftist political red-hots of today. There is no more intellectually incoherent, monolithic, and intolerant space in the republic than the college of liberal arts at the local university. The contagion



Larry Thornberry of Tampa is a long-time contributor to The American Spectator. His work has also appeared in the Washington Times and the Wall Street Journal.

fear into Communists and freeloaders everywhere for centuries to come.”

Johnson never met Liebel. No one in Tampico did. The sign just showed up on the front stoop one day, along with a dozen roses.

Of course there is something romantic in all of this. Reagan's life reads rather like a fairytale, and Tampico plays it up. The day before the 1980 election, a double rainbow appeared over the building where Reagan was born. Someone snapped a picture. When Reagan took office the next year, a delegation from Illinois visited the White House and delivered it to him. He noted in his diary that it was an “eerie” coincidence.

Nevertheless, he kept the thing on his desk through both his terms. A sort of rendezvous with destiny, I suppose. The museum has it now — and plasters reproductions on everything from magnets to postcards to t-shirts.

The myth of Reagan captured the attention of his biographer, Edmund Morris, who fancied his subject's childhood in Illinois to be an American riff on Wagner's *Parsifal*. Beginning in Reagan's first term, Morris shadowed the president closely with the intention of producing an intensely researched biography. But, like most other Reagan affiliates, Morris found Reagan impenetrable. Morris believed those miles of desolate cornfields had something to do with the problem.

So did Nancy Reagan, who told Lou Cannon, the president's most acclaimed biographer, that “a combination of his childhood and never feeling any root anywhere and never having an old friend for a long, long time,” as well as a disastrous first marriage, committed the Great Communicator to a life of reticence.

Reagan's silence frustrated Morris so much that he scrapped the biography idea. Instead, when writing what became *Dutch*, he created his own version of Reagan's itinerant childhood, where a fictionalized version of himself could be Reagan's old friend. Morris, leaving behind his nearly unlimited access to the White House, took to western Illinois, following Reagan's heritage down what is now the trail and interviewed anyone who had ever known (or claimed to have known) him.

Morris threw himself into his work, almost literally: While at the Rock River, he reinvisioned himself as one of the people Reagan fished out of the current.

“I felt bound to testify that I owed these past seven decades to Dutch,” Morris wrote, explaining his own fictional near-death experience as prophetic for the way in which Reagan brought the United States to triumph in the Cold War. “Some day, I hoped, America might acknowledge her similar debt to the old Lifeguard who rescued her in a time of poisonous despair and, in Joseph Grucci's words, carried her ‘breastward out of peril.’”

Reagan's life reads rather like a fairytale, and Tampico plays it up.

Morris had been given the chance of a lifetime — to shadow someone that he rightly realized possessed “presidential greatness” — and many people felt that he blew it. And none more acutely than the people of Tampico, whose anecdotes, recollections, and lore the biographer used to weave his fable.

The book is still displayed prominently in the Reagan birthplace museum. It is, after all, a piece of Reagan history. But people Morris interviewed when he visited Tampico with Reagan in 1992 thought he, typical of a journalist, had pretended to be their friend only to betray them.

Helen Nicely, who had shown Reagan the room where he was born, felt that Morris, in presenting his childhood had “portrayed it more like a fantasy” than “the true story of how it all happened right here,” Johnson recalled. In attempting to fabricate the Myth of Reagan, he had obscured a very real myth that already existed and is still being cultivated by the people of western Illinois.

This is, after all, why the Reagan Trail exists. And why the people of Tampico hold Reagan so close to their chests. The town, along with Dixon and Eureka, is the gatekeeper of his official history. At the end of the day, what they say about the man becomes fact.

Reagan, for instance, could have been the second Catholic president, if it were not for a curious incident that occurred after he was born. Reagan's father, Jack, was supposed to tell his mother, Nelle, to have his son baptized at St. Mary's, the local Catholic parish. Nelle for some reason demurred, and Reagan became a Disciple of Christ.

It's strange, walking into St. Mary's and seeing what could have been. As I examined the high altar and baldacchino, Deacon Bill Lemmer said that it is reputed to be “the most beautiful church between Chicago and Des Moines.” But it is in decline: in the past twenty years it has gone from about two hundred families to sixty. An average of twenty-seven people attend Sunday mass. It no longer has a full-time priest.

Pointing up at the organ, a beautiful, nineteenth-century beast, Lemmer told me how the only person in the parish who knows how to play it, a woman over eighty years old, is so weak that she can no longer ascend the steps to the loft. There is no music on Sundays.

But it could be worse. The church Reagan attended with his mother closed in 2018, without ceremony. The secret of why Reagan never was baptized Catholic went down with it. Jack's negligence, Nelle's independence — it could be one or both.

“That's the story we tell, anyway,” Johnson said.

“And it's probably true,” Lemmer added.

When we returned to the museum, a couple from Georgia was visiting. They were on the trail, too, just for a day trip. The wife remarked that Reagan reminds her of Donald Trump. And then she was off to inspect the outhouse.

Johnson joked to me as we walked out to my car that if I ever needed her to make up something about Dutch, to give her a call.

“With some of these things, we keep telling the same story and everything,” she smiled. “Because, at the end of the day, who is going to dispute us?”

That comment reminded me of Morris. I asked if maybe he wasn't entitled to his own myths, too.

“It's hard to tell about anything,” she said. “We all have our own opinions.”

is the last thing BLM wants. It would put them out of business.

The price of attending or viewing one of these now-political leagues' games, in addition to the usurious ticket or cable package tariff, is to see America insulted by kneeling athletes, indulged young prats whom America has made rich and privileged beyond their wildest dreams. Talk about biting the hand that over-feeds you.

For reasons too complex to plumb in this article, the corporate Big Feet who now own and control professional sports in America have either ignorantly or cynically signed on to the hoax and slander that America is a racist hell-hole, thereby making themselves allies to the revolution that has been ignited and fed by this lie. Lenin would call them useful idiots. I've a few names for them myself, but I'll pass over these as this is a family publication.

An egregious example: On July 24, Opening Day of MLB's sixty-game, asterisk season, the Tampa Bay Rays, which should be my team, tweeted, "Today is opening Day, which means it's a good day to arrest the killers of Breonna Taylor."

Let this one sink in. According to the social justice warrior executives at

One Tropicana Drive, Louisville police officers who when fired on in the tragic cock-up that led to Breonna Taylor's death should be arrested for returning fire. How many Rays fans accept the police-officers-doing-their-duty-are-criminals philosophy embodied in this brain-dead tweet? Then

If what was once billed as "the national pastime" brings in a quarter of the viewers of a show about people finding old stuff in their attics, something is very, very wrong.

where's the comfort level, not just in St. Petersburg and Tampa but across the sports spectrum, for fans who know very well that America is not systemically racist, and that the brutality on America's streets

is, with rare exceptions, perpetrated by criminals, not by police officers?

So readers can easily understand why this conservative Americano and Cat-5 sports fan has submitted his principled resignation from the world of sports, at least the professional kind. I urge other patriots to do the same. The biggest source of sports money comes from television. That means the only way fans can steer sports execs away from their current love affair with the race-baiting Left is to stop watching. If the plague ever withdraws, and stadium turnstiles can start turning again, fans can stay away from these as well. Abstinence, painful for those whose lives have been enriched by sports, is the most effective way to deliver the message.

I've not watched a pitch, a snap, or a shot since Big Sport caved to the mob. This breaks my heart as I've loved sports all my life. I've watched, played, cared about, read about, and talked endlessly about sports for seven decades. I've written about them for five. My early athletic exemplars had names like Stan Musial, Ted Williams, Rocky Marciano, and Bob Cousy. (I came along a tad late for Joe DiMaggio and Joe Louis.) But

I've had to pull the plug. Otherwise I would feel like I was sleeping with the enemy.

Professional sports' current genuflection to the Left's race obsession is dangerous not only to the nation but to the future of professional sports itself. The games we love are a terrible mix with politics. Sports bring many satisfactions to both participants and viewers, not to mention disappointments, of course. I've written of these in this space for years now. But one of the many reasons Americans tune into the games, or suit up themselves, is to escape, for a time, the many conflicts that roil us, including politics. Sports have been, and if the multi-billion-dollar sports industry is to survive must remain, a refuge from politics, not another forum for it. The last thing Joe Americano needs and wants on Sunday afternoon when he picks up his remote after a hard week's work is political hectoring from ignorant athletes and league executives who consider themselves Joe's betters. *Joe just wants to watch the damn ball game!* He doesn't want to hear that LeBron James, when not busy playing kissy-kissy with Chinese communists, thinks he's racist scum.

Pre-political sports, in addition to being entertaining, had unifying benefits. Every member of the community, regardless of occupation, education, social standing, or complexion, could agree on supporting the home team, living or dying as the team succeeded or failed. The hedge fund manager and the janitor, together on a long elevator ride, could chat amiably about yesterday's game, if about little else.

But the easygoing and unifying charm of sports leaves the stadium when fans are nagged to declare on the tendentious political questions of the day. Currently fans are badgered to accept the whites-are-oppressors, blacks-are-victims narrative of the Left. The NFL went so far as to open games with a tune, "Lift Every Voice and Sing," which some designate "the black national anthem." This was played along with the "Star-Spangled Banner," presumably now the white national anthem. Wow. Separate anthems for blacks and whites. How unifying is that?

I'm not alone in giving sports a bye because of politics. But it's difficult, probably impossible, to say how many others have. Clearly viewership across all sports is down, especially for the NBA. The recent NBA finals drew an average TV viewership roughly that of *Dancing with the Stars* and below the average for *Antiques Roadshow*. The first two games of MLB's American League Championship Series between the Tampa Bay Rays and Houston Astros fetched the smallest viewership of any LCS games in history, the second game attracting a miniscule 1.88 million. If what was once billed as "the national pastime" brings in a quarter of the viewers of a show about people finding old stuff in their attics, something is very, very wrong.

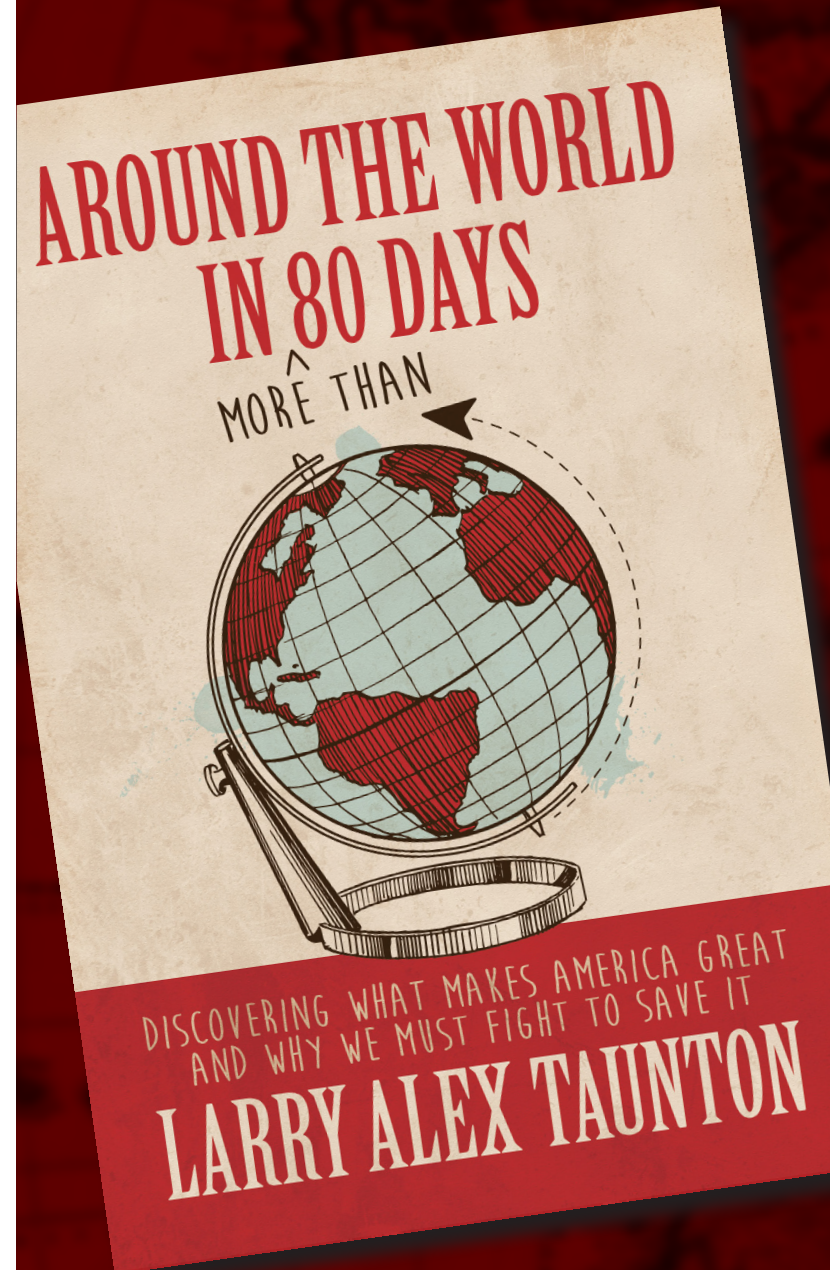
There is indeed a lot wrong in today's professional sports, much of it preceding the plague and on-field politics. Young people today are not developing an interest in sports to the degree of previous generations. There's wildly overpaid athletes forcing wildly overpriced tickets to attend games. There's the increasingly corporate nature of today's sports. Many fans can't even remember the name of the soulless corporation their hometown stadium is named after. And clearly sports executives have vastly overestimated their fans' toleration of, let alone market for, woke politics on the field.

Will the folks who run professional sports finally recognize this and make corrections? I certainly hope so. Because, damn it, I want my games back. I want to be able to sing "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" again, and mean it. 🐾



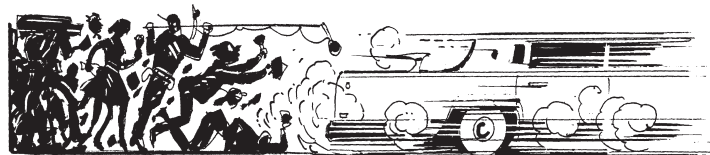
Missing the Kick, 2020 (Bill Wilson)

"Buy this book to arm yourself for the defense of your freedoms..."



Buy a second copy for a friend."

-David Horowitz



Joe's Got a Deal For You!

The market hasn't asked for electric vehicles, but Biden has mandated it.

by Eric Peters

Huey Long promised a chicken in every pot — to be paid for by “the rich,” whose incomes would be confiscated to pay for it.

Joe Biden, channeling AOC through his eyes-wide-vacant and piano-key smile — wants an electric car in every garage.

And everyone's going to pay for it.

It's all part of the Green New Deal that Joe Biden swears he isn't for. To be fair, he may not remember he's previously said he's for it, though he styled it — on his website, before it got scrubbed — “a crucial framework for meeting the climate challenges we face.”

Regardless, it's more of an offer you can't refuse, as a “deal” generally involves consenting parties.

This one will be dealt to the parties who will pay for it — by those who have the muscle to make them pay for what they already can't afford.

Today's income redistributionists have put the collectivist transmission in reverse. Rather than shake down the rich to pay for the working stiff's supper, the working stiff will be mugged to help put an electric car in every rich person's garage.

The not-rich generally lacking garages, ipso facto.

And thus, a place to charge up an electric car — which makes owning one problematic, leaving aside the cost of the thing itself, about which more shortly.

It's hard to run an extension cord from an apartment window to the street down below.

And if you do have a garage, you'll need to “invest” — as Joe puts it — in a “fast” charger, if you want to get moving again without waiting overnight. Plus the electrician, to wire it.

Joe says the electric car will save “billions of gallons of oil,” which may be true. It doesn't mean people won't be paying more for energy.

Electricity will inevitably cost more as artificially induced demand for it increases, putting a strain on the already strained existing infrastructure. More demand than is necessary, interestingly — because the typical electric car touts performance — Elon Musk styles it “ludicrous speed” — which it must because it cannot tout efficiency or economy. Neither being feasible given the state of electric car technology — as opposed to what has been promised is just around the corner ... for the past thirty years.

So, one thousand pounds of batteries per car, running four to eight hundred volts. Which is why “ludicrous speed” costs \$40,000 — to start.

Speed always costs money.

But with EVs, someone else gets the bill.

Including the environment Joe says he cares so very much about. Achieving “ludicrous” speed requires ludicrous

quantities of environmentally unpleasant things like cobalt, a key component of electric car batteries. Cobalt is uncommon — and mined (often by hand and often by the hands of children) in places like the not-so-Democratic Republic of the Congo, at much cost to the local environment.

An EV devoted to efficient basic transportation would not need all that cobalt — or lithium or graphite — the equivalent, in electric car terms, of a Dodge Challenger Hellcat's 6.2-liter supercharged V8 engine.

And just as gratuitously wasteful.

But then, such extravagance is necessary — to attract the Green Elite, who aren't any more interested in basic transportation, electric or otherwise, than they are in giving up their private jets and six-thousand-square-foot homes.

But they are interested in making it harder for the Average Joe to have such things — and seem to enjoy making him feel guilty about wanting such things while they enjoy such things.

Be Green as we say — not as we do.

Have a look at Joe's home, for instance. All 6,850 square feet of it. That's a carbon footprint large enough to encompass three Average Joe-sized homes. It uses three times the electricity, too.

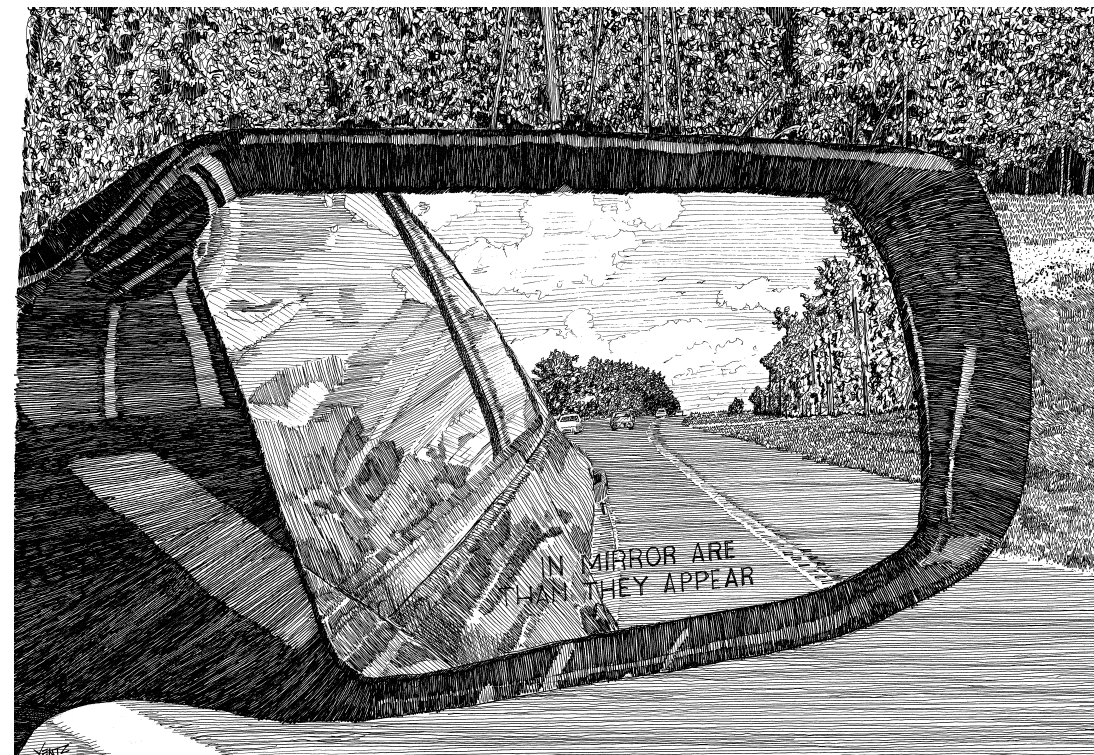
A bigger-than-it-needs-to-be battery pack also needs more-than-is-necessary electricity, which results in more-than-necessary emissions, just not at the tailpipe.

This apparently doesn't affect the environment.

Joe has been evasive about where the electricity needed to power the Green New Deal will be summoned from, if not from natural gas, coal, and oil-fired utility plants, which power the bulk of the country's several major power grids.

Solar and wind infrastructure sufficient to replace even a fourth of current natural gas, coal, and/or oil-fired electricity generation simply doesn't exist, and it won't unless massive sums of other people's money are mulcted to pay for it all.

Perhaps a more pertinent question is one begged by the Green New Dealers but never asked — much less answered: If the “climate” is in such peril due to carbon dioxide “emissions,” then — channeling Greta Thunberg — how dare they tout and subsidize and force-feed conspicuously consumptive electric cars that generate more-than-necessary CO₂, whether at the smokestack or the tailpipe?



Going Forward with a Rear View, 2019 (Jeffrey Yentz)

Never mind; it all sounds good.

If you don't think about it too much.

People might want to think about the cost of all that electricity, though. Which they'll be paying for even if they don't actually own an electric car, as utilities will inevitably be charging everyone more — to pay for the increased generating capacity that will be necessary to power all of that wonderful ludicrousness.

We'll also pay in time — its loss — while we wait for all that not-so-fast-charging at the five hundred thousand outlets Joe wants us to pay for.

This time, universally.

At the moment, EVs are optional. You don't have to spend \$31,600 to own the least expensive electric car on the market, Nissan's Leaf. But under the Green New Deal, that option will be made standard.

The Green New Deal intends to mandate non-electric cars out of existence, by “zero emissions” vehicle production quotas already in force in states like California and via federal fuel economy mandates that are in force nationally and that can only be complied with by not using liquid fuel at all — since the only emissions that count, apparently, are the ones that come out of the tailpipe.

This is why every major car company is either producing or has pledged to produce electric cars. The market hasn't asked for it, but the government has mandated it.

Joe wants to mandate the market part by making it very hard — if not impossible — for people to buy anything else.

He has promised, per the “deal,” to “phase out” gasoline — probably via exorbitant motor fuels taxes. He may try to impose punitive taxes on non-electric cars, as in China — where you can still drive a non-EV ... provided you pay the government roughly \$14,000 for the privilege.

That will certainly make non-electric cars almost as unaffordable as electric cars like the Leaf. The problem remains, though: If people can't afford an electric car, how does making non-electric cars equally unaffordable make the EV more affordable?

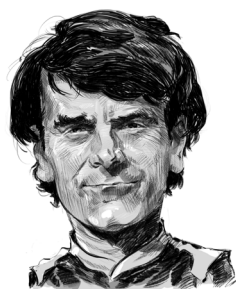
The answer — which Joe won't tell you about — is that all cars are to be made unaffordable. Walking — and hive-living — is a core tenet of the Green New Deal.

For the Average Joe, that is.

At least we'll get our exercise, like the average Chinese person did circa 1970. On two legs — or two wheels ... powered by two legs. Or in “mass transit” that will put us on Joe's schedule instead of ours.

The Green Nomenklatura will no more be deprived of its wheels — or its freedom to travel — than Leonid Brezhnev was deprived of his two-ton ZiL limousine or Kim Jong Un his Lincoln Continental.

That's the deal Joe's got in store ... for us. ❧



Eric Peters has been writing about cars, bikes, and the politics of the road since the early Nineties. His books include Automotive Atrocities and Road Hogs; his new car reviews are distributed by Creators Syndicate.



Cuffing Season and Our Epidemic of Loneliness

Members of “the connected generation” feel disconnected from fulfilling relationships. Could their failed attempts to fix that actually be a good sign?

by Amile Wilson

As autumn marches toward winter, a crispness fills the air, the days get shorter, and pumpkin spice gets replaced by peppermint, all while an emotional cocktail of hopefulness, nostalgia, and seasonal affective disorder set into the pits of stomachs. 'Tis the season ... cuffing season, to be exact.

For those of you not acquainted with mating habits of the big-city millennial of the species, cuffing season is the time of year when singles feel the particular imperative to “couple up” for the cold months. After all, who wants to show up alone for all those holiday parties, or brave the ice and snow for a first date with ... “Who are you again?”

When the pandemic first broke in March some moved quickly to find a “quarantine partner” while others were too afraid of the risks and settled in

for a long period of digital or “socially distant dating.” As some restrictions eased, the dating scene became a rush not only to find someone for the holiday but also for the coming surge of infections and renewed lockdowns. The website Vice described this year’s early start to cuffing as a “bloodbath” full of additional pressures.

The possibility of being quarantined with someone has also raised the stakes on the quality of partner sought in the perennial *cuffing*.

Claire Harmeyer writes in the lifestyle blog HelloGiggles:

The search for potential partners is heating up: Amarnath Thombre, the chief executive of Match Group Americas (which owns Tinder, OKCupid, Match.com, Hinge, and Plenty of Fish), told the New York Times that in-app messages were up 30 to 40% on most of the company’s apps compared to this time last year. And according to an internal survey conducted on dating app Hily, 54% of 1,200 respondents say

that they are thinking about getting into a committed relationship more often than they did before the lockdown.

Whether the cold temperatures, the onslaught of social gatherings, or the brightly colored tinsel, the winter months inspire the need for more than just a high-rise apartment and bowl of Ramen. The winter months are a reminder that *belonging* is important, whether for the emotional support of a family or the desire for a “cuddle buddy” for warmth. And as much as we love them, dogs don’t quite cut it.

Yet the “cuffing” rarely lasts, at least in traditional terms.

Once springtime hits, the seasonal pressure from grandma asking, “When will you find a nice young man/woman and settle down?” disappears and the urge to start fresh means even the slightest annoyance can become a deal-breaker. And thus the annual cycle continues.

Pew Research says that “Only 44% of Millennials were married in 2019, compared with 53% of Gen Xers, 61%

of Boomers and 81% of Silents at a comparable age.” If the trend continues, millennials will soon have the lowest marriage rate under forty of any group in American history.

Amid their perpetual bachelor/bachelorette-hood, it should come as no surprise that rates of loneliness among millennials are skyrocketing, and they are turning to global politics for a source of belonging.

The Barna research group’s 2019 “The Connected Generation” survey found that a mere one-third of adults ages eighteen to thirty-five responded that they “often feel deeply cared for by those around them (33%) or that someone believes in them (32%).” In stark contrast, 77 percent of that same demographic agreed with the statements “Events around the world matter to me,” and 57 percent said the same of “I feel connected to people around the world.”

From climate change to pandemics to worldwide responses to local problems, today’s young adults feel less cared for by their local

communities even while feeling more impacted and more concerned about global affairs.

In lieu of friends, family, church, and other traditional institutions, a generation of people have turned to activism and government — and the bigger the government, the better.

Global concern
and Twitter
followers can never
replace genuine
relationships.

The sad fact is that global affairs are the ones these same millennials are the least likely to impact. After all, speaking or tweeting at your city council is a more likely catalyst for change than attempting to solve the conflict in Darfur. But “the connected generation” feels the exact opposite.

Yet cuffing season suggests that whatever is happening around the world, there is still a void in this exact *moment*, this exact *space*, and this exact *life*.

Buried inside the “cuffing” is more than simply a wish to “drive the cold winter away.” Coupling up provides the most basic, secure, and close-knit community of people who do “care deeply” and “believe in” those around them. Try as they might, people cannot escape the need for social belonging and the yearning for another person to look them in the eye and with genuine concern say, “You are loved.”

The proliferation of cuffing season shows that we cannot escape our nature. As Franklin D. Roosevelt said, “Peace, like charity, begins at home.” So too does “belonging.”

No matter how connected to the world they feel, global concern and Twitter followers can never replace genuine relationships. Cuffing season might just be a great reminder that in the cold winter months, it is our closest relationships that truly keep us warm, not a distant government. ❧



The Cold of Winter, 2020 (Bill Wilson Studio)

Bill Wilson



Pandemics and Prohibition: 100 Years Later

One of the silver linings of COVID-19 is the relaxing of nonsensical alcohol restrictions.

by C. Jarrett Dieterle

One of the most common, if perhaps overdone, media talking points during COVID-19 has been to point out the supposed parallels to the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic that occurred just over a century ago. Regardless of how one feels about this comparison — and putting aside the obvious health and medical advancements since the early 1900s — it has all but obscured another important hundred-year anniversary in American history.

On January 17, 1920, the infamous Volstead Act, which gave teeth to the Eighteenth Amendment, went into effect. At the stroke of midnight the evening before, Americans raised their glasses one last time, toasted their companions, and braced for the start of Prohibition. But Prohibition did not just happen overnight.

In the decades-long build up to the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment, a temperance fervor swept America. Religious revivalists and prominent progressives teamed up to create a forceful mix — don't call it a cocktail — of anti-alcohol sentiment that started at the local level and worked its way up to the federal government.

States began enacting what was known as a “local option,” which meant laws that let individual cities and countries vote to go dry. Statewide alcohol bans quickly followed suit, with Kansas becoming the first state to enact

a booze ban into its state constitution in 1881 (Maine had previously passed a Prohibition law in 1851, but it was repealed shortly thereafter).

From there, the race was on. But for a political movement that started off with so much fanfare and momentum, Prohibition has long been recognized as an utter public policy failure. Americans from every stripe of life rebelled, and soon a thriving black market of moonshine, bootlegging, and rum-running sprang up from sea to shining sea.

As students of history know, Prohibition was relegated to the dustbin of history just thirteen years after it began. The experience of that era forced policymakers to learn a fundamental truth of the human condition: The more governments try to deny us our beloved hooch, the more we will revolt.

In 2020, one might be tempted to believe that politicians and governments have finally internalized this lesson, but almost as soon as COVID-19 struck, this century-old wisdom sadly seemed to fly out the window.

The Mexican government announced in early April that beer was “non-essential” and that the country would be shutting down all breweries in the country during the pandemic. The result was as sad as it was predictable: Dozens of Mexican residents died of alcohol poisoning after swapping their normal beer consumption for poorly made black-market moonshine.

Even though such a tragedy is unlikely to occur anytime soon in the U.S., it quickly became clear that some American government officials were also determined to forget the lessons of Prohibition. Early on in the pandemic, Pennsylvania liquor regulators shuttered the state's network of government-run liquor stores despite those stores being the only retail outlets for distilled spirits in the state.

While there were no direct reports of any deaths resulting from Pennsylvania's decision, it's unquestionable that it created unnecessary public health risks. Scores of Pennsylvania residents flooded across state lines to liquor stores in bordering locales like New Jersey, Ohio, and West Virginia. Many of the store owners in those states, unable to prepare for such a surge in foot traffic during the pandemic, were forced to temporarily close to avoid being overwhelmed.

And, as numerous public health experts pointed out at the time, adopting a public policy response that encourages people to move across state lines instead of sheltering in place was one of the

more obvious examples of government ineptitude during the pandemic.

But to give credit where it's due, there has also been good news when it comes to alcohol in 2020. COVID-19 has forced politicians — at least those not residing in Mexico or Pennsylvania — to revisit antiquated rules around alcohol. Since Prohibition's repeal, America has continued to labor under an extremely restrictive system of alcohol regulation.

Although the federal government is less involved in alcohol governance these days, state and local governments still maintain an extreme amount of power over alcohol. Even in modern-day America, we still have dry counties, control states where the government is in charge of all liquor sales, and a convoluted “three-tier system,” which often prevents alcohol producers from delivering or selling their own products directly to customers.

This system has muddled along for almost a century out of sheer stubbornness and inertia, but signs are finally popping up

that a sea change may be coming. During COVID-19, lawmakers began asking simple questions like, If we can get everything under the sun delivered to our doors in under two days — including heavily regulated items like pharmaceuticals — then why not alcohol? And why can't bars sell to-go margaritas alongside the takeout pizzas they've already been selling for years?

Finding no good answers to these questions, over thirty states have temporarily allowed to-go and delivery alcohol during the pandemic, and states like Ohio and Iowa have already made these reforms permanent.

The winners of this long-overdue modernizing of American alcohol laws will be entrepreneurial craft beverage makers, who provide much-needed manufacturing jobs and community gathering spots across the country.

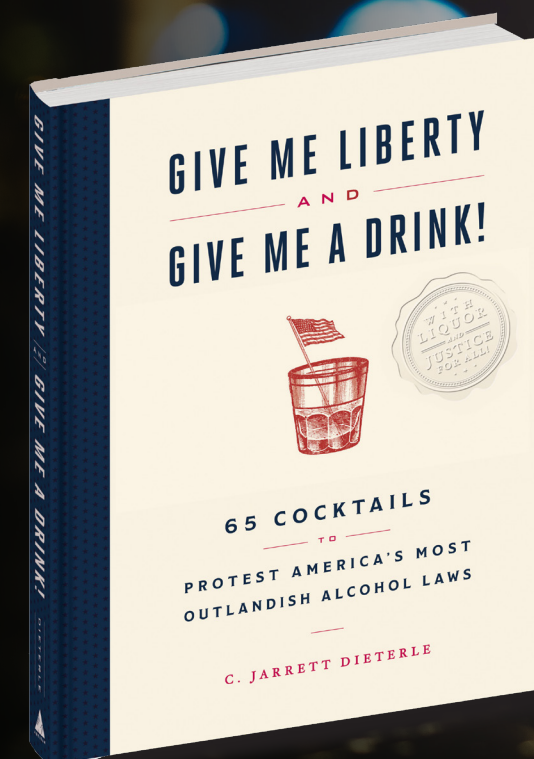
And, of course, us consumers, who might be understandably eager to wash away the bad taste of 2020 with a refreshing drink. 🍸



Mixers, 2020 (Bill Wilson Sandia)

C. Jarrett Dieterle is a senior fellow at the R Street Institute in Washington, D.C., and the author of the new book *Give Me Liberty and Give Me a Drink!*

**“An impassioned case against a senseless system . . .
Come for the cocktail recipes, stay for the call to arms.”
— Clay Risen, *American Whiskey, Bourbon, and Rye***



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PLASTERED AT THE POLLS

MAKES 1 DRINK

The simple three-ingredient Alaska Cocktail provides a bounty of herbal flavors with its spirit-forward combo of gin and yellow Chartreuse.

Election Day is an annual occasion to celebrate freedom, and it's only natural that some of us like to celebrate freedom by getting completely sloshed—after all, how else are we supposed to justify voting for the crappy options we have to choose from? In Alaska, though, your choices for an Election Day tippie are limited. Under an archaic law, restaurants, bars, and other businesses can't sell alcohol on Election Day until after the polls close. The rule dates back to a time when polling places were often situated in saloons and politicians would bribe voters with the promise of free alcohol. But such times are (unfortunately) long in the past, so shouldn't this law be left in the past too? Well, if you feel undecided, have another drink. It's not a bribe. Promise.

- 2 ounces gin
- ½ ounce yellow Chartreuse
- 2 dashes orange bitters, preferably Regans' (see Resources, page 157)
- Lemon twist for garnish

Combine the gin, Chartreuse, and bitters in a mixing glass filled with ice and stir for 20 to 30 seconds. Strain into a chilled coupe glass. Garnish with the lemon twist.

BOOZE FOR VOTES

Election Day booze bans may seem altruistic, but they actually run counter to our country's history. During a Virginia House of Burgesses campaign early in his career, no less than George freakin' Washington handed out rum, beer, and wine to voters in exchange for their votes. The man knew how to be persuasive!

GIVE ME LIBERTY AND GIVE ME A DRINK!

SANITIZED INSANITY

MAKES 1 DRINK

The Brits originally used Pimm's liqueur as a health and digestive aid, and drinkers today still celebrate the Pimm's Cup for its herbal and refreshing tones.

When the COVID-19 pandemic tragically hit America, it created a lot of unintended consequences. The food-and-drink industry was among the sectors most affected by all the changes. Despite the uncertain times, many distilleries and breweries stepped up to produce hand sanitizer to help the general public. Sadly, some states had sclerotic alcohol laws on the books that punished this charitable spirit. In Hawaii, the government actually started cracking down on alcohol producers that were giving away sanitizer for free. They claimed that providing free sanitizer ran afoul of state laws that forbid producers from enticing customers to buy alcohol with free gifts. Even in the midst of tragedy, the government just can't seem to help itself.

- 2 ounces Pimm's Cup No. 1
- 5 or 6 mint leaves
- 3 ounces ginger ale
- Cucumber wheel for garnish
- Orange wheel for garnish
- Lemon wheel for garnish

Combine the Pimm's and mint leaves in a highball glass filled with ice. Top off with the ginger ale and stir gently for 5 to 10 seconds. Garnish with the cucumber, orange, and lemon wheels.

GIVE ME LIBERTY AND GIVE ME A DRINK!



WEAPONIZED PITCHERS

MAKES 6 DRINKS

This classic version of the Bloody Mary will spice up your brunch routine.

When you think of the most dangerous weapons, your mind immediately goes to guns, knives, and . . . drink pitchers? Well, at least that's the case for DC's Alcoholic Beverage Control Board. The District decided to implement a rule permitting bars to offer bottle and pitcher service to customers, but only if they did not allow patrons to remove the bottles or pitchers from their tables. Why? For the important purpose of preventing customers from wandering around the bar with "large containers" that could be "used as weapons during altercations." It's important to remember: People don't kill people. Pitchers kill people.

- 36 ounces tomato juice
- 18 ounces vodka
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 2 teaspoons bottled horseradish
- 1 tablespoon Tabasco sauce
- Freshly ground black pepper

Combine the tomato juice, vodka, Worcestershire sauce, horseradish, and Tabasco sauce in a large pitcher. Stir for 15 to 20 seconds. Serve each drink in a pint glass filled with ice. Grind enough black pepper over the top to lightly cover the surface of the drink. Stir 5 to 10 seconds more.

GIVE ME LIBERTY AND GIVE ME A DRINK!

Your Guide to the Only Manhattan Worth Visiting

It'll make you feel much more alive than the city is these days.

by Tony Woodlief

Start with two solid, respectable ice cubes. None of those suspicious-smelling milk-colored clunkers from your fridge's ice maker, mind you. Show some self-respect, for God's sake.

Next, liberally sprinkle your cubes with aromatic bitters. Be like the U.S. Congress in an election year. Like Oprah with a basketful of Pontiac keys. Shower your cubes with irresponsible angostura love.

Now pour in a shot of the best dry vermouth you can get. Look, this is no time to get chintzy. You're not decorating a freshman dorm room with IKEA furniture. This is the penthouse suite of beverages, my friend. Class the joint up.

Now hit it with a shake of orange bitters. This should be more subtle than what you did with the aromatic bitters. Think Peter Strzok's little shoulder shimmy during his congressional testimony, only imagine a man doing it.

The next part is up to you: two shots of a whiskey of your choosing. This is the moment when a specialist would seek to impress you, writing something like, "I prefer the Sounder Mountain 241 Saddleback Rye, handcrafted in the

Flint Hills of Kansas and cured in Davy Crockett's casket." Rest assured, you don't need a fancy-schmancy whiskey to



Manhattan, 2020 (Bill Wilson Studio)

make a fine Manhattan. I usually go with a bourbon, preferring its sweetness to what I lose when I go with dry over sweet vermouth. I love Traverse City Whiskey

Company's cherry bourbon, and I always make sure to buy a case when I visit my secret hideaway in northern Michigan. Barring that, I go with High West's American Prairie bourbon. You also can't go wrong with Four Roses small batch, or even Makers 46.

The only bourbon I advise against is Woodford Reserve. I don't have a problem with the flavor or quality, mind you; it's just that I've seen too many dudes named Chad sipping it from a mason jar while grooving to Mumford and Sons. Don't be that guy.

Now for your final ingredient: two cherries. If a Maraschino just crossed your mind, I want you to slap yourself in the face for me. What you need here is a delicious, flavor-drenched Griottine. Add a little of the juice if you want extra sweetness.

Last, but certainly no less important: Give it a good stir. Go Bob Marley on that glass. Make some mischief in there. Now drop in one more fresh, crisp, lovely cube, and you're ready to enjoy this little taste of American goodness, handcrafted in your very own glass. And there's not a damn thing the revenuers or teetotalers can do about it. 🍸

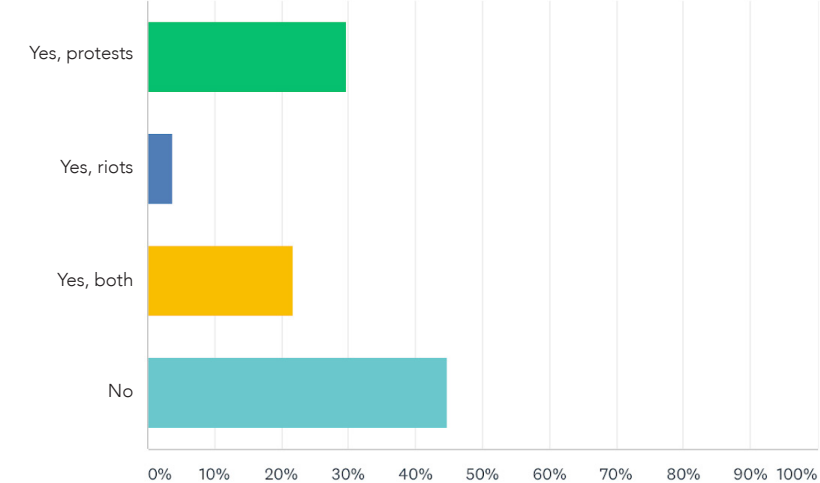
Tony Woodlief is a writer in North Carolina.



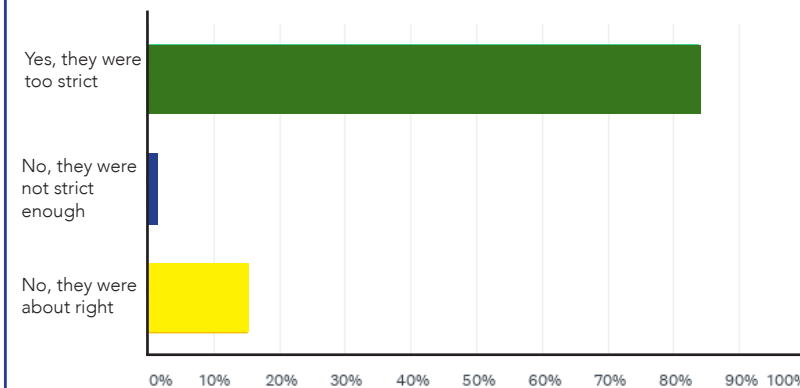
This October, we sent a survey to our readers to see how the pandemic affected their lives. We received a huge number of responses — thank you!

Here are some highlights:

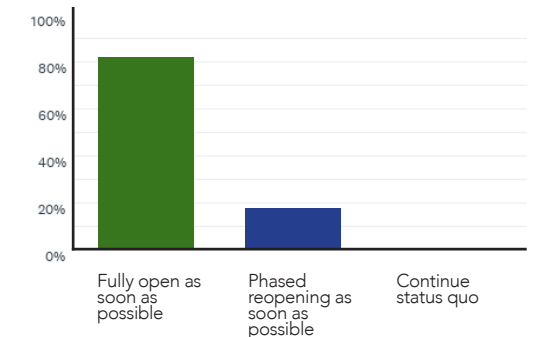
Were there protests or riots in your area?



Do you believe the lockdowns in your area were too strict?



Do you believe the country should reopen fully or partially?



Do you have any movie or TV recommendations that you discovered this year?

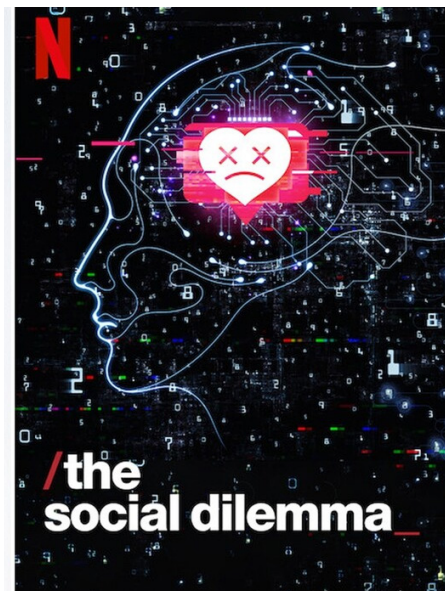
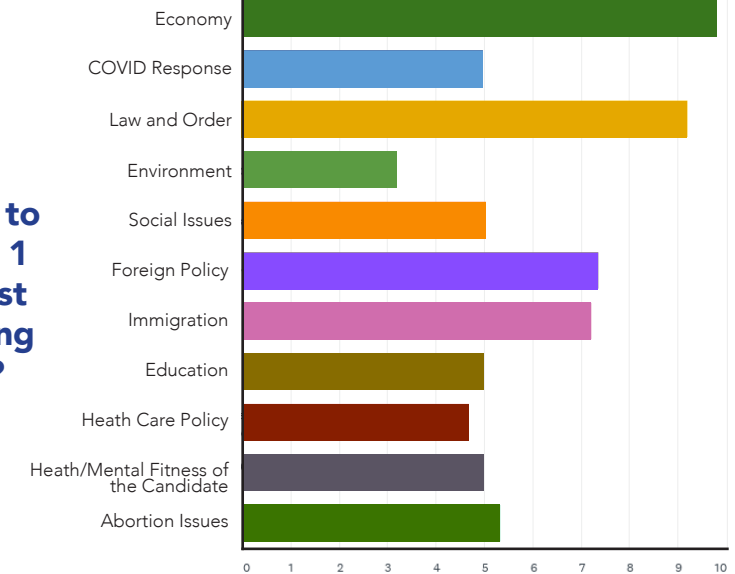
"Schitt's Creek swept the Emmys because it was brilliant escapist fun, but also because everyone in the town was decent to one another. Somehow we all want that place to exist, it's in our memories. It was a modern Mayberry R.F.D."

"Bosch on Netflix."

"The Social Dilemma on Netflix was excellent and not just a little terrifying. I'd recommend For All Mankind on Apple TV. The plotline was an alternate reality in that Russia beat the U.S. to the moon."



How important are the following issues in deciding which presidential candidate to vote for, on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being the least important, and 10 being the most important?



What denomination or religious group do you belong to?

Orthodox Christ Latter-day Saints Methodist Church Jesus Christ Church
 Assemblies of God Jewish RC Presbyterian Reformed Baptist
 Anglican Roman Catholic Southern Baptist
 Catholic Evangelical Christian N Protestant
 United Methodist none NA Non-denominational Raised Catholic
 Lutheran Church Missouri Synod Episcopal Jesus Christ Latter-day
 Episcopalian

Did you or anyone you know experience remote schooling? How did it go?

"Yes, my daughter and two of my sons. It went relatively well."

"Coworkers. Sounded difficult, but with good kids, good schools (private), and parents nearby, it went pretty well. Hard to juggle with work, though."

"Yes, I have two college age kids and the experience was non-existent or very poor. Not worth the money, so the kids are taking time off until things change back."

"I work for a university. Struggling to get online courses right and also failed in trying to reopen for onsite classes in August."

"Two of my daughters, who are in college. Major disaster. The top-notch scholar hates it because she is learning less than she might in class. The not-so-serious student hates it because it is much harder to learn this way, and because the human engagement factor turns out to be key, even in quant classes, like Econ stats, and econometrics. And not having normal interaction with friends, and in the world is isolating and depressing."

"My girlfriend is a teacher both live and virtual. It is fun to hear her experiences with virtual. She was saying the other day she could hear parents whispering answers to children. HA!"

"Both my college-age kids. They're good students, didn't miss a beat, but only over the short haul. My son is back at college, but still online-only classes this fall. I warned him it might be mentally challenging to be so isolated living alone back at school and being online only. Yet again, I also felt it may be a time of great personal growth and introspection for him. Character doesn't develop in easy times."

"I am a school board director. I could fill a page with the problems of remote schooling, the worst of it being internet connectivity. The parents are up in arms — the kids (K-5) especially are losing ground rapidly."

"Grandchildren. Not well: the children need real human social interaction and instruction. Nine-year-old boys need a lot of activity and are not good at sitting in front of a monitor all day. Pretty much awful."

What do you listen to on the radio?

"Rush Limbaugh and Rock & Roll."

"Rush Limbaugh and Sirius XM."

"Rush only."

"Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, and music from a golden oldies station."

"Rock, Rush, some local talk radio when I can."

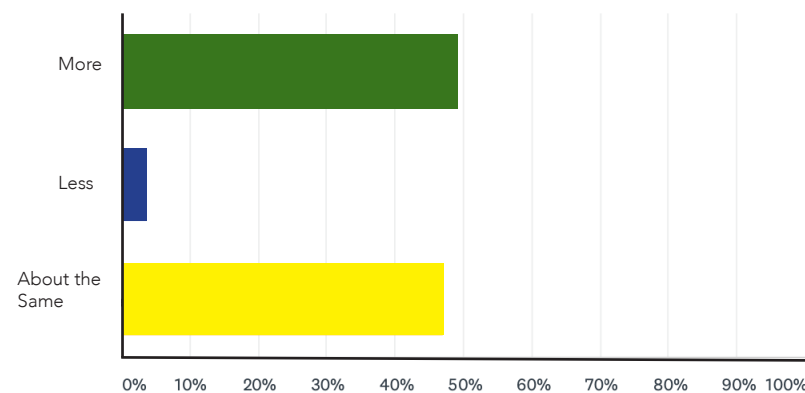
"Rush, Sinatra, Classic Vinyl, Classic Rewind and Ozzy."

"Rush, Prager, NPR on morning walks (national propaganda radio)."

"Rush, Rush and more Rush."

Editor's note: Not every respondent listens to Rush, but so many of you mentioned him that we thought we'd show how your tastes align with other Rush fans.

Have you cooked or baked more at home this year?



Good old-fashioned home cooking and baking: for many of us, that has been one of the silver linings of the COVID crisis. We asked our readers to share their favorite recipes to make for family and friends.

Here are some of our favorites:

Balsamic Braised Ribs

1 Tbsp. vegetable or canola oil
 6 bone-in short ribs (about 3 lbs)
 2 leeks, white part only, sliced
 2 medium yellow onions, sliced
 2 carrots, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces
 2 celery stalks, cut into 1-inch pieces
 2 cloves garlic, chopped
 ½ tsp. red pepper flakes
 1 tsp. salt
 ½ tsp. ground black pepper
 2 Tbsp. tomato paste
 1 Tbsp. Dijon mustard
 3 sprigs fresh rosemary
 ½ cup balsamic vinegar
 ¼ cup packed brown sugar
 1 quart unsalted beef stock

- In a large, heavy-bottomed pot such as a Dutch oven, heat the oil over medium heat. Working in batches so as not to crowd the pan, sear the short ribs for 3–4 minutes on each side, or until well-browned. Transfer the short ribs to a plate.
- Add the leeks, onions, carrots, celery, and garlic to the pot and cook until well browned, stirring occasionally, about 12–15 minutes. Add the red pepper flakes, salt, pepper, and tomato paste, and cook until the tomato paste turns a brick reddish-brown color, about 6–7 minutes.
- Add the Dijon mustard, rosemary sprigs, balsamic vinegar, and brown sugar. Scrape up any browned bits from the bottom of the pot. Return the short ribs to the pot and then add the beef stock. Bring the mixture up to a low simmer and cover.
- The pot can be left on the stovetop on low heat or placed in a 325° F oven for 2–3 hours or until the short ribs are very tender when pierced with a fork.
- Carefully transfer the meat to a platter. Cover with foil and a couple of kitchen towels to keep warm. Using a slotted spoon, remove and discard the solids from the liquid. Bring the liquid to a boil on the stovetop and cook until reduced to about 1 cup. Drizzle the glaze over the short ribs and serve.
- This recipe can also be used with other tougher cuts of meat, such as lamb shanks, pork shoulder, etc. Also, once the meat and vegetables have been browned, the ingredients could be transferred to a crock pot and cooked on low for 6 or so hours.

I have made this with the ribs, lamb shanks, and both a beef roast and pork roast, and it's been good with all of them. I actually prefer using the boneless short ribs I can buy at Costco. I like to make mashed potatoes with it and pour the glaze over them as a gravy. And I prefer to finish the cooking of the meat in the crock pot — adds flavor as well as helps make the meat very tender. The mixture of the balsamic vinegar and the brown sugar (plus the rosemary) imparts an excellent flavor to it all.

From Steve Buntin



Check out our blog for weekly recipe recommendations from readers and staff, and send in your own to editor@spectator.org!



A Well Loved Kitchen, 2020 (Bill Wilson Studio)

Cold Weather Chili

5 lbs. beef, ground or cubed (actually, you can use pork or venison, etc., in any combination)
 3 green bell peppers, chopped
 5 medium onions, chopped
 4 ribs celery, chopped
 6 cloves garlic, minced
 4 cans (28 oz. each) tomatoes
 2 jalapeño peppers, minced (discard the seeds to get rid of the heat)
 1 46 oz. can tomato juice
 1 can beer
 6 Tbsp. chili powder
 1 Tbsp. paprika (hot Hungarian is best)
 1 Tbsp. cumin powder
 1 Tbsp. cayenne (red) pepper, ground
 2 Tbsp. black pepper
 1 ½ Tbsp. cocoa powder (or 1 1-inch cube bakers' chocolate)
 ½ cup fresh parsley, chopped
 2 Tbsp. sugar
 2 cups black beans, soaked for 2-3 hours in hot water
 1 40 oz. can kidney beans, drained
 2 Tbsp. salt — to taste

- In a large kettle, brown meat, peppers, onions, celery, and garlic. Add remaining ingredients and simmer for 2 or more hours — the longer the better. Remove grease as necessary.
- Serve plenty of chopped onions, cheese, and sour cream on the side as garnishes. You will also need lots of French bread and butter.
- Enjoy!

Texans claim to have developed the dish we know as chili, or more properly as chili con carne. The carne part means "meat" in Spanish, and real chili aficionados say they will use any kind of meat imaginable — beef, pork, armadillo, snake, birds of any description, alligator, and just about any other kind of "roadkill" you can think of!

Remember now, we are talking about what Texans claim to put in their chili. Actually, many historians believe that hot peppers were used in the past to cover up the taste of meat that had been sitting in the sun tooo long.

But enough of that. Every summer, thousands of chili fanatics converge on an old ghost town in the Texas desert for the world chili cookoff. Today's recipe is made with readily available ingredients and is very easy to prepare. It is spicy hot, so you may want to use the cumin and cayenne pepper sparingly. For those of you who really like it hot, I would add an additional bottle of Tabasco sauce, or 5-6 additional tablespoons of cayenne pepper — or both! Feel free to substitute — chili recipes are to be used as only a starting point.

From Steve Younker

Czech Fruit Dumpling

3 Tbsp. butter, softened
 6 Tbsp. ground farmer's cheese
 Pinch of salt
 1 ½ to 2 cups all purpose flour
 1 egg
 Milk, as needed
 Fruit (cherries, plums, apricots, or large strawberries)
 More butter as needed for serving
 Sugar and/or cinnamon sugar for serving

- Work ingredients (other than fruit, sugar, and cinnamon sugar) into mixture that can be rolled.
- Roll out onto a floured board to 5/16-inch thickness.
- Cut into small squares.
- Place 1 piece of fruit on each square and close it.
- Place all the dumplings in boiling, slightly salted water.
- Boil 5 to 8 minutes.
- Drain in colander.
- Place in bowl.
- Serve with drawn butter, cottage cheese, or sour cream, and sugar or cinnamon sugar.

From Peter Taussig



Preparing the Fruit, 2020 (Bill Wilson Studio)



Plenty, 2020 (Bill Wilson Studio)

Better-Than-Boxed Mac 'n' Cheese

I don't have recipes; I just DO it. The generations behind me (I am 71) seem to have been raised as mac 'n' cheese junkies. I ate it some at my Maw Maw's Sunday dinner, where it was, of course, made from scratch. There was an occasion my lady friend (45) needed to take some to a school function. I like to cook, so I told her I would try my luck at avoiding the Kraft box variety. Here goes:

24 oz. large elbow macaroni
 One "loaf" Velveeta or store brand meltable cheese
 One 32 oz. sharp cheddar cheese shredded
 One 16 oz. sour cream
 One stick butter (real stuff)
 One package cream cheese

- Put noodles in pot and add water just enough to cover them. Pressure cook for 3-4 minutes (whatever your brand pot allows). You may release pressure or allow to sit until released and it shifts to keep warm.
- Cut the Velveeta into squares small enough to stir around until melted.
- Add sharp cheese and other ingredients in no particular order. Noodles should still be hot enough to melt ingredients. If not, put on "warm."

I tried this and have been told it is the "best they've ever tasted" by the school and several others she has given some to. A variation is to use shredded pepper jack instead of cheddar. It is different but good, too.

From Michael D. Green

Creamy Garlic Butter Tuscan Salmon

4 salmon fillets, skin off (or trout or any white fish)
 Salt and pepper, to season
 2 tsp. olive oil
 2 Tbsp. butter
 6 cloves garlic, finely diced
 1 small yellow onion, diced
 1/3 cup dry white wine (optional; do not use a sweet white wine)
 5 oz. (150 g) jarred sun-dried tomato strips in oil, drained
 1 3/4 cups half and half (See Note)
 Salt and pepper, to taste
 3 cups baby spinach leaves
 1/2 cup fresh grated Parmesan cheese
 1 tsp. cornstarch (cornflour) mixed with 1 Tbsp. water (optional)
 1 Tbsp. fresh parsley, chopped

- Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Season the salmon fillets (or fish if using) on both sides with salt and pepper, and sear in the hot pan, flesh side down first, for 5 minutes on each side, or until cooked to your liking. Once cooked, remove from the pan and set aside.
- Melt the butter in the remaining juices left over in the pan. Add in the garlic and fry until fragrant (about one minute). Fry the onion in the butter. Pour in the white wine (if using), and allow to reduce down slightly. Add the sun-dried tomatoes and fry for 1-2 minutes to release their flavors.
- Reduce heat to low heat, add the half and half (or heavy cream), and bring to a gentle simmer, while stirring occasionally. Season with salt and pepper to your taste.
- Add in the spinach leaves and allow to wilt in the sauce, and add in the parmesan cheese. Allow sauce to simmer for a further minute until cheese melts through the sauce. (For a thicker sauce, add the milk/cornstarch mixture to the center of the pan and continue to simmer while quickly stirring the mixture through until the sauce thickens.)
- Add the salmon back into the pan; sprinkle with the parsley and spoon the sauce over each filet.
- Serve over pasta, rice, or steamed vegetables.

Feel free to use half light cream and half 2% milk in place of half and half. Alternatively, use all light cream or heavy cream.

From Larry Nix, via CafeDelites.com

Cherry Crumble Cake

Crumb topping:
 1 cup flour
 2 Tbsp. butter
 1/4 cup brown sugar

Batter:
 3 eggs
 1 cups sugar
 1 1/2 cups cake flour
 1 tsp. baking powder

Filling:
 1 lb. Bing cherries, pitted
 1/2 cup sugar
 1 Tbsp. tapioca starch or cornstarch
 1 tsp. almond extract

Crumb Topping:

Mix flour and butter until crumbly. Add brown sugar and beat until uniformly granular. Set aside.

Batter:

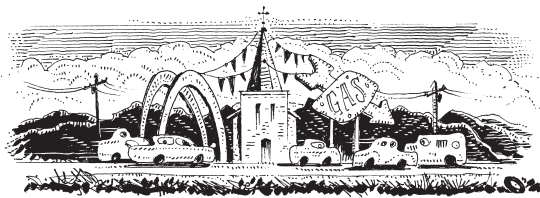
Beat eggs and sugar until well blended and fluffy. Stir flour and baking powder together, then add to egg mixture and mix only until smooth. Transfer to an 8-inch by 8-inch glass casserole dish that has been oiled.

Filling:

Stir ingredients together and immediately pour over batter. Sprinkle with crumb topping and bake at 350° F for 60-70 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.

If the top browns before the cake is finished, place a piece of aluminum foil loosely over the top.

From Peter Taussig



WWE: Wrestling Without Entertainment

Can a sport all about participation survive its audience's banishment from the stadium?

by Daniel J. Flynn

Professional wrestling fans, like the “shy Trump voter,” harbor an intense passion expressed to others in whispers if at all. The hobby ranks just above pornography but below anime as a pastime engendering the strange combination of enthusiasm and embarrassment. This fight club follows the first two rules of Fight Club, save for when enthusiasts gather in their safe spaces, which until recently included sports arenas.

Coronavirus, in addition to slaughtering nonagenarians and *My 600-Lbs Life* aspirants, counts the attempted murder of professional wrestling among its crimes. Vince McMahon, a survivor of the Gobbledy Gooker, Papa Shango, Mantaur, and other doomed gimmicks, refused to let it. Neither in Hollywood nor on Broadway but in the squared circle did the industry credo “the show must go on” find a faithful acolyte.

World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) never stopped never stopping. Initially, WWE played to an empty crowd. Think WTBS's Saturday night wrestling show from the 1980s, minus the twenty-five people and their nineteen teeth.

Then the WWE realized the show takes place on a stage larger than its canvas. Stealing a name from *Mad Max* and a concept from the NBA, Thunderdome surrounds the ring with screens featuring cheering fans.

Watching ThunderDome Raw, nothing about Asuka — her subliterate grunts, her kabuki movements, her Bret Hart-level wrestling — gets lost in translation. No-names organizing

Daniel J. Flynn, author of Cult City: Jim Jones, Harvey Milk, and 10 Days That Shook San Francisco, is a senior editor at The American Spectator.

under “Retribution” — postapocalyptic admirers of the accoutrement of Batman villain Bane — prove the sum often eclipses its parts. The “Associate” of A. J. Styles — a big, bald, bearded, black guy — reminds that wrestling traces its genealogy to the freak-show tent.

The reaction of virtual fans to all that beat the deadness of an empty building. Still, fans criticized ThunderDome as faker than the wrestling. WWE admits to pumping in crowd noise, and a few fans claimed that producers instructed fans whom to boo and applaud. The strange popularity of thumbs up, thumbs down, raise-the-roof, and other hand gestures hinted that if the WWE did not instruct fans whom to cheer they at least instructed them how to cheer. Some movements seem very Max Headroom-ish. Eagle-eyed observers noted duplicated images. And Jessi Davin pointed out that she watched rival AEW as WWE used recorded footage to fill the audience for a less popular program. Though backstage footage inadvertently exposed a blacklist, which included former WWE champion C. M. Punk and the flags of Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Tibet, it did not prevent images of a Klansman, a beheading, and Chris Benoit, the former WWE fan favorite who veered from the script by murdering his wife and child before murdering himself, from popping up on television.

“That piped-in noise, I can hear that,” Jey Uso told *The Gorilla Position* podcast. “I hate it, though. There is no energy. There is no energy. I have to draw that from myself or my opponent.... I miss the people. That was what made wrestling special.”

He gets it. So did the late Lawrence Levine, author of *Highbrow/Lowbrow*.

“With important exceptions — particularly in the areas of sports and religion

— audiences in America had become less interactive, less of a public and more of a group of mute receptors,” Levine wrote in 1990. “Art was becoming a one-way process: the artist communicating and the audience receiving.”

Wrestling, neither sport nor religion but at the same time both, recalcitrantly maintained the group catharsis of audience participation. The fans not only essentially scripted winners and losers through their reactions but became part of the show through the ubiquitous signs (e.g., “My Mom Makes a Great Lasagna” and “Without Me You’d Just Be Aweso”), the inside-joke shouts of “What,” and other *Rocky Horror Picture Show*-esque morphing of spectator with spectacle.

Shakespeare, as *Highbrow/Lowbrow* shows, once appealed to the masses the way professional wrestling now does. Fourteen years after Edwin Booth's younger brother non-kayfabe murdered the president, a Chicago theatergoer attempted to murder Booth for murdering the title role in Richard II (just as a partisan of Pedro Morales stabbed Blackjack Mulligan in the Boston Garden in 1971). Shakespeare's villainous Richard III, misplayed in Sacramento in 1856, coaxed missiles of cabbage and potatoes, sacks of flour and soot, a dead goose, firecrackers, and, in the coup de grace, a consciousness-ending pumpkin. In Albany, a ticket-holder screamed at Iago: “You damned-lying scoundrel, I would like to get hold of you after the show and wring your infernal neck.”

Shakespeare was still real to them, dammit. And wrestling, when staged on the stage but still real to them in the crowd, is like Shakespeare, at least that throwback, lowbrow version. Without that palpable passion, it remains a soap opera minus the acting talent. ❧

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