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THE AMERICAN SPECTATOR

FALL 2021

Edited by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.



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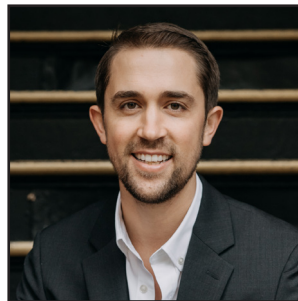
2021 BARBARA OLSON AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM



David Daleiden



James O'Keefe



Christopher Rufo



Abigail Shrier

Their work is featured on pages 26-33.



THE AMERICAN SPECTATOR

CONTENTS

- 5** Minding Joe
Wlady Pleszczyński
- 6** Will America Grow Up?
Melissa Mackenzie
- 8** Joe Biden, From Comedy to Tragedy
R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.
- 10** Afghanistan: How It Became America's Disaster
Frank Schell
- 14** The United States Cannot Ignore Arctic Security
Evan Maguire
- 17** Marxist Greed
Paul Kengor
- 21** Is Pegasus Peeping on Your iPhone?
J. Arthur Bloom
- 23** COVID Zero Is the Technocracy's Test Run
John Jiang
- 26** Investigating the Human Trafficking of Aborted Infants
David Daleiden
- 28** An Interview with James O'Keefe
- 30** How to Fight Wokeness
Christopher F. Rufo
- 32** The Teen Trans Craze
Abigail Shrier
- 34** From Conservatism to Revivalism
Scott McKay
- 36** President Kamala
George Parry
- 38** Social Conservatives Have Something to Say on Every Issue
Saurabh Sharma
- 40** The Left Relegates Black Americans to Another Generation of Disadvantage
Dov Fischer
- 43** Pornhub, OnlyFans, and How Financial Institutions Are Aiming to Curb Sex Trafficking Online
Laila Mickelwait
- 45** It Is Casey, Not Roe, on Trial Before the Supreme Court
Margot Cleveland
- 47** The Supreme Court May Rule on Affirmative Action — But What Happens Afterwards?
Ellie Gardey
- 50** The Church Caves in the Age of COVID
George Neumayr
- 52** A Flight Into Death: Sigmund Freud, Byung-Chul Han, and the Decadence of Late Liberalism
Matthew Omolesky
- 60** *Bright Star, Green Light:* An Enchanting Revisit of John Keats and F. Scott Fitzgerald
Leonora Cravotta
- 62** Will the Real Obsolete Man Please Stand Up?
Daniel J. Flynn

MOTTO

Politics is too important to be taken seriously.

MISSION STATEMENT

The core purpose of *The American Spectator* is to educate, entertain, and inform readers with smart and witty investigative journalism and editorial writing from a conservative point of view. What distinguishes *The American Spectator* is its wry, youthful, and fresh perspective.

VISION STATEMENT

The American Spectator maintains fidelity to the conservative dogma of happy warriors of generations past while not being stuffy, inflexible, or incurious about new phenomena in politics and culture.

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Revealing the truth and helping readers understand it and thereby attain the wisdom that comes from being well informed.

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Developing young writers who bring a fresh approach to timeless ideas, and supporting all contributors who present those ideas anew for a growing audience.

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THE AMERICAN SPECTATOR
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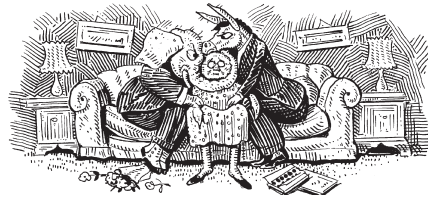
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Minding Joe

He shifts from sad passivity to snarling aggression.

by **Wlady Pleszczyński**

When last we met in this space, the subject of the aging Joe Biden's mental acuity came up. I essentially contended that he wasn't as far gone as many conservatives would have it. But now I'm not so sure. Since he turned withdrawal from Afghanistan into a Munich 1938 moment, he's been on a permanent downhill slide. The only thing that might stop it is if the avalanche catching up to him buries him in snow. He's already paid a mental price, and it's one that someone in his demographic doesn't recover from. It manifests itself in increasingly erratic behavior.

First came resignation, as when in a short session with the White House press corps he placed his head atop his folded hands. A guilty house pet is known to do that, pleading for some TLC and other reassurance. He barely could summon the energy to speak, and when he did, the words registered in a hush.

The next day, in a joint appearance with visiting Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, he displayed the same mental and physical fatigue in his demeanor and remarks. When it was

Bennett's turn to speak, Biden sat back in his chair, closed his eyes, and soon folded his hands, on his lap this time, and one had to assume he was dozing off. (Because no snoring was detected, it's unlikely he was ever fully asleep.)

Then came August 31, and a very different-sounding Biden (shouldn't he be regularly drug tested?), as he defiantly marked the official end of America's presence in what he's turned into Talibanland. Just following

the military's recommendations, he said. He passed the blame in many ways. And he was just warming up. By the following week, he was attacking the American people, especially those who did not agree with him on his panic-driven approach to COVID-19. "Unlike anything I'd ever heard from an American president," the kindly Mike Pence said. But as a friend reminded me, isn't that the way it is with many a victim of dementia, shifting from sad passivity to snarling aggression?

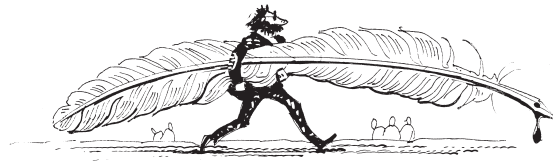
Well, at least we know who could play Joe Biden in *Joe Biden: The Movie*. The other day I caught a showing on Starz of *The Father*, with the great Anthony Hopkins in the title role. It won him an Oscar last year, for capturing the sadness and meanness of an oldster unable to cope with, let alone understand and accept, his now irreversible mental decline. It's a horrible sentence to be condemned to in one's final stage of life.

Under Biden there are worse fates, and to these he still subscribes of his own volition, it would seem, as when attacking the Texas abortion law as "almost un-American" and siccing the Justice Department on the state. Perhaps in such moments he forgets that he's a Catholic, a rosary-carrying Catholic at that, as he likes to boast, which leaves many puzzled as to why he would be such an ardent opponent of life in its first stages. At this point, that's too complicated a question to throw his way.

What we do know is that Democrats have come a long way on abortion. Where not that long ago they wanted it to be "safe, legal, and rare," today they're insistent that it be anything but rare and enjoy the status of a holy sacrament. It's a strange way to find meaning in life, assuming there's any meaning left to it. And under the leadership of Joe Biden, how can there be? 🐾



Wlady Pleszczyński is executive editor of The American Spectator.



Will America Grow Up?

We are a nation of overgrown toddlers throwing dangerous and expensive tantrums.

by **Melissa Mackenzie**



Melissa Mackenzie is publisher of The American Spectator.

Primary colors are the colors of children. They're the colors of kindergarten and baby chew toys. They're the colors of Disney cartoons. And they're the colors of a movement of children who refuse to grow up.

The sacrament for this infantile religion is abortion. Abortion is the most childish of decisions. It is the avoidance of responsibility for previous bad choices. Abortion is revered and exalted because it serves the greater purpose which is to bolster an impossible ideology: that men and women can be the same, that sex is only for pleasure, and that children are, as Barack Obama once said, a burden.

The spirit of this religion is feelings. Its hallmark, mental instability. This has been proved out by research, but one only needs eyeballs and an iPhone to see the TikTok offerings of these folks to know something is deeply wrong in their minds.

It's one thing when college students invade the president's office of a far-left West Coast school and refuse to let him go to the bathroom because they want safe spaces. It's another thing when this addled thinking infects business boardrooms, the government, and the military.

We're seeing the results of childish cultural rot everywhere and in everything. It's in the 8 million people who'd rather take government handouts than take one of the 10 million American jobs available.

It's in the response to a virus that poses little risk to healthy people. Grown adults shriek at other adults about masks and vaccines. They refuse to mind their own business and they tattle like children to mommy government.

The mother government, aka Joe Biden, has promised that Americans will be OK no matter what and suburban moms and Never Trumpers incensed by a gruff blowhard, were wooed by dulcet tones from a preternatural liar. They wanted swaddling and comfort from their government, something the government is incapable of, to fight an airborne virus mid-mutation. It was doomed to fail and nonsensical to expect any different. Still these same folks, like a childish Esau, would trade their freedom for a vaccine passport. They're willing to trade their liberty birthright for a piece of paper.

At the root of all this is a willingness to sacrifice someone else for one's own pleasure. Someone else dies (a baby), someone else works to take care of the adult child, someone else loses his freedom so the adult child feels comfortable. You, you, you, die and sacrifice for me, me, me.

Being pro-life rebuffs this worldview. In this one idea, that all are created equal, that this child has the right to pursue happiness, that the vulnerable must be protected, that a child is worth the sacrifice, stands in opposition to selfishness. In protecting an innocent child, the adults, even the teens, grow up. They take responsibility for their choices made in freedom and they accept the consequences for an adult decision.

In today's world, personal responsibility sounds old-fashioned. Adults know, though, that freedom is impossible without it. With the freedom to make choices, consequences of those choices result. When people abuse that freedom, they invite external regulation.

The strange thing now is that the irresponsible want to regulate and impinge on the rights of the responsible. Business owners, homeowners who rent, taxpayers, families, church-goers, and anyone who resists the reach of the suffocating mother government are cast as villains in this modern tableau. Mommy wants to keep her children reliant and needy. Otherwise, what's her purpose?

Meanwhile, those who burn, loot, murder, riot, and intimidate are portrayed as modern-day heroes. In reality, they are lost, angry, confused, overgrown toddlers throwing dangerous and expensive tantrums. Children.

Only a fabulously rich country blessed with peace for decades could be so decadent. The Antifa violence-bringers are well-dressed, wealthy, and privileged. They carry their sophisticated equipment while they maraud — utterly hypocritical and unaware.

Only an indolent island nation led by self-dealing elites could leave her own citizens behind in a terrorist country that they themselves armed. Billions in taxpayer money gone in an instant to help her enemies. These are the actions of people who believe they are untouchable. These are the actions of people who have lied to themselves and believe because they don't pay them, there are no consequences.

There are always consequences.

Murdering an unborn child scars the soul. Abandoning commitments scars a nation. A woman lies to herself believing that in "getting rid of the problem" she's evaded the consequences. Not so. She has been lied to and she learns that she'll live with the decision for the rest of her life no matter how hard she tries to numb herself or ignore it.

This irresponsibility and the childish people who create the culture will consume itself. It is consuming itself.

Somebody must work, do, build, grow and sustain what's come before to have something for the future. What happens when a majority just doesn't care enough to save themselves?

Abortion is murder and it's also social suicide. America, like China, like Europe, like India will bitterly regret destroying their future. It will be impossible to sustain the present.

More than that, though, abortion breeds a disregard for not just the life of a child but all life. The child, or anything that gets in the way of pleasure and self-fulfillment, is an enemy to be destroyed.

To America's credit, her citizens have been horrified by the Biden administration's actions in Afghanistan. The Biden administration figures these folks will forget by midterms and certainly by the next presidential election. It's possible the cynics in Biden's administration are right.

Oh, the irony! A nation who has killed her babies has become a nation of infants wanting the government to care for them.

Their leaders treat the dependent with scorn and abandon their commitments with impunity for who will stop them?

Hopefully, Americans reject this continuing infantilization and choose, instead, to grow up. Freedom depends upon responsible adults making wise choices. It depends on being willing to sacrifice fleeting desires, their time, and their treasure, for long-term ideals like life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Let's hope Americans wake up to the blessings they enjoy and do more to keep them.

In this issue, we will examine the cultural rot that has culminated in the Biden administration. From critical race theory to transgenderism to the abortion industry to the media and everything in between, *The American Spectator* examines the modern abyss. The good news is that many writers on these pages are fighting this rot in impressive ways and showing that independent journalists can make a difference.

Our writers are also focusing on America's place in the world. The Biden administration has managed to diminish America in a grievous way. Will America come back? 🐾

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killed her babies
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nation of infants
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government to
care for them.





Joe Biden, From Comedy to Tragedy

Joe has been living on a multiplicity of lies for years.

by **R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.**

How could a comic figure from the world of politics such as President Joe Biden suddenly become such a tragic figure on the American scene? One minute he is bringing all civilized observers to laughter by saying to Katie Couric that President Franklin Roosevelt dealt with the 1929 stock market crash by getting “on television” and reassuring his fellow Americans as only FDR could do. (For the woke folks in my audience, Franklin Roosevelt was not president of the United States in 1929 and the television had yet to be popularized. Go ahead, look it up.) So, one minute Joe cracks us up with his nonsensical statement about President Roosevelt and in the next minute he is betraying an entire country, Afghanistan, and leaving its people tyrannized by ragamuffins. What is more, he has lied to his fellow Americans, repeatedly, obdurately, and blatantly.

Joe has been living on a multiplicity of lies for years. His fortune has been composed by lies — how can a 50-year creature living at the public trough become a millionaire? He has lied as a politician from his first day in politics. He has even been caught plagiarizing from John Kennedy, from Bob Kennedy, and, of course, from Neil Kinnock, who was at the time leading the British Labour Party. Joe’s son, Hunter,

has also been an active liar for years, a fraudster, a cheat, and now most flagrantly he hopes to get by with his deceits because he has said the Big Guy is watching out for him. The Big Guy is, of course, Papa Joe. Well, we shall see. But Joe, you can lie to the American people, and you can lie to the media. You can even lie to your priest, but you cannot lie to the ragamuffins who just beat you and walked away with enough military equipment to arm a small army. Moreover, you cannot lie to the clock. The clock says you have three and a half years remaining in office. That is three and a quarter more years to screw things up even bigger than you have screwed things up in the past six months.

President James Buchanan is redeemed! He is no longer the worst president in American history. (Oh, for the woke folk who are still in my audience, James Buchanan is commonly held by historians to be America’s worst president. Even worse than Jimmy Carter.) By the way, if you can find a statue of Buchanan somewhere I will bet it is not decapitated. The woke have disfigured Abraham Lincoln and George Washington, but they will lay off of Buchanan. He was their kind of guy.

Joe became a tragic figure because of his character. In a word, he lacks character.



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

Bill Clinton lacked character too, but he boldly lied about it. When he was questioned about his character deficit beginning in the 1992 campaign, he would whine and complain that he had just endured a low blow. He acted as though by 1992 pols no longer had to suffer from such dirty tricks. Good character was a thing of the past. He beat George H. W. Bush, a war hero. Bill Clinton went on to be reelected and gained in popularity despite his affair with Monica and numerous other members of the fair sex. Character no longer mattered.

Bill Clinton raised such a pathetic stink about the critics attacking his character that many simply gave up questioning it. Thus, he went on his merry way abusing

women, lying shamelessly about it, and moving on to his next target. When he left office what did he do? He took to the

Joe became a tragic figure because of his character. In a word, he lacks character.

airways flying around with his pal Ron Burkle on Burkle's private jet which was playfully called Air F**k One. My sources tell me Bill had some sort of falling out

with Burkle. So he picked up with Jeffrey Epstein, the molester of underage girls. I guess we all know how that friendship ended. Ever since Bill has been under the bed in Chappaqua.

Yet Bill set the tone for the modern presidency. Now Joe has shown what a modern president can achieve: disaster in a matter of months. He entered the White House as a buffoon, a widely regarded plagiarist, a master of the gaffe, a man surrounded by mediocrities — and those are his most accomplished appointments. It gets worse after Antony Blinken and Lloyd Austin. My guess is it will get still worse. Who said character did not matter? 🐞



A Marine holds a baby while a family in-processes at Hamid Karzai International Airport, Kabul, Afghanistan, Aug. 28, 2021. (Department of Defense/Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Victor Mancilla).



Afghanistan: How It Became America's Disaster

Our leaders know about levers of power, but have never worked them.

by **Frank Schell**

No amount of spin-doctoring by the White House, no false dichotomy of complete withdrawal or escalation, no disingenuous blaming of the Trump administration, no conflating disaster with courage, and no emotional appeal to stop the “forever war” can alter reality: the United States has been dealt a staggering defeat and has conducted an ignominious and catastrophic withdrawal from Afghanistan, shocking NATO, other allies, and supportive Afghan partners.

The defeat of the world's most powerful military and economic colossus, the United States, will embolden Islamist radicals from the Middle East to Southeast Asia and will leave the world a more dangerous place. Even though some state-of-the-art military equipment was made inoperable, the Taliban have been left with a substantial array given to the Afghan National Security Forces. The Taliban are now better equipped than ever with American vehicles, aircraft, assault rifles,

night-vision equipment, laser pointers, and grenade launchers. It is a formidable guerilla force estimated at 58,000 to 100,000 in a UN Security Council report issued in June.

Afghanistan may now revert to an ungoverned space, as Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Hazaras challenge the authority of the Pashtun-dominated Taliban, while elements of ISIS-K and al-Qaida regroup in caves in the remote escarpments and mountains of Afghanistan where they can plan attacks against Western interests and the United States — as they did before 9/11.

As the Biden administration would spin it: contingencies were considered, withdrawal from a battlefield is inherently messy, and the logistical problems encountered at Hamid Karzai International Airport were inevitable. But perception, as it is said, is reality. Even liberal-leaning mainstream media and our NATO allies have been highly critical of the botched evacuation that left Americans and Afghan partners at the mercy of the Taliban, known for their ruthless executions and mistreatment of women and young boys — with 13 U.S. service members killed, 18 U.S. service members wounded, and an estimated 170

civilians killed in a suicide bombing at the Kabul airport.

So what went wrong? The initial mission was to find and kill Osama bin Laden and degrade the Taliban and al-Qaida's capability to support and mount attacks against the West — eliminating a future threat. However, the mission was allowed to expand with the added complexity of counterinsurgency (COIN), nation-building as a Western-style democracy, and restoring the Afghan economy. The misjudgments and causes of failure may be classified as strategic, operational, and cultural.

In strategic terms, (COIN) required over 100,000 U.S. and NATO troops, a bill of goods sold to the Obama administration that did not work. It sounds noble to win hearts and minds through good works, but if that were possible, the rural and urban people of Afghanistan would have denied access to the Taliban and ousted them. Further, COIN was allowed to prevail even after Osama bin Laden was killed by SEAL Team Six, with the mission emphasis later moving to counterterrorism, i.e. standoff or so-called over-the-horizon capability. It was also strategically naive to believe in

Frank Schell is a business strategy consultant and former senior vice president of the First National Bank of Chicago.



Airmen prepare to lead evacuees aboard a U.S. Air Force C-17 Globemaster III aircraft at Hamid Karzai International Airport, Kabul, Afghanistan, August 21, 2021. (Department of Defense, Air Force Senior Airman Taylor Crul).

nation-building in a tribal, patriarchal society with an economy that represents about 80 percent of the world's opium exports.

It is well known that in April, President Joe Biden rejected the counsel of senior military commanders and the advice of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Mark Milley, who advised against a complete withdrawal. Besides that, the most devastating operational error was to withdraw the U.S. military before U.S. civilians and diplomats and Afghan nationals could leave the country. This resulted in pandemonium at the Hamid Karzai International Airport, and our citizens and Afghan collaborators were exposed to the Taliban with no protection. This withdrawal was based upon the flawed assumption that the Afghan National Security Forces would be able to support Afghan governance and a gradual exit of non-military personnel.

Another critical operational error was the withdrawal of U.S. air support, which evidently demoralized the Afghan forces, causing them to flee the battlefield and leave weapons and other material behind. Moreover, another operating error was committed immediately after 9/11, explained former secretary of defense, Gen. Jim Mattis, in his book *Call Sign Chaos*. Distinctly different tribes from northern Afghanistan were sent to hunt for bin Laden in Tora

Bora, a predominantly Pashtun region in the east; the hunters were said by Mattis to be strangers, unable to relate to the local population.

Culturally, many of our policymakers, senior advisers, analysts, and even Biden himself have limited or zero operating experience. They come from and through the political processes of Congress or various staff policy positions.

It was strategically naive to believe in nation-building in a tribal, patriarchal society with an economy that represents about 80 percent of the world's opium exports.

They have never run anything such as a military operation, multinational enterprise, global line of business, or international development organization. They have a fundamental staff culture as well-informed observers, knowing

about levers but never having worked them, particularly under conditions of duress. They also may not understand the passion of tribalism and those fighting in the name of their god against a foreign occupational army that is backing a corrupt government. They are skilled in analysis, academically credentialed, and thoughtful, but they lack the skepticism, worldliness, and cynicism required to address the evil that threatens us.

In relation to its core expertise, the U.S. military acquitted itself well, quickly toppling the Taliban, hunting and killing bin Laden, and eventually conducting a massive airlift to get Americans and Afghans out of the country. But the war in Afghanistan is far from over — restive tribes will continue to fight. Further, both Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Milley have advised that terrorist elements such as al-Qaida could reestablish themselves, and do so more rapidly with the collapse of the Afghan National Security Forces and the Afghan government.

Biden was determined to make a cathartic announcement on September 11, speaking at Ground Zero in New York, at the Pentagon, and at the Flight 93 National Memorial in Pennsylvania; “America’s longest war has ended,” he might say. While it is noble to end war, it is ignoble to end it as the president did.

It will take many months, if not years, for a special commission to establish accountability for America's Afghan debacle. Was Biden stubborn and ill-informed? Was he unduly motivated by the symbolism of announcing an end to a 20-year war on 9/11? Was there groupthink in Washington without due

consideration of dissenting opinions? Was there a time when America's senior leadership knew it was unwinnable, yet they remained in denial? Did the intelligence community underestimate the Taliban's capability to sweep the country, and overestimate the Afghan National Security Forces' willingness

to fight without U.S. air cover? Were the failures of other empires in Afghanistan disregarded, and did America and its NATO partners institutionalize hubris?

Accountability is necessary and desirable, but it cannot change history or bring back the dead. 🦋

U.S. Marines assist a child during the evacuation at Hamid Karzai International Airport, Kabul, Afghanistan, August 20, 2021. (Department of Defense/Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Victor Mancilla).





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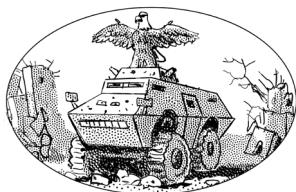
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The United States Cannot Ignore Arctic Security

Being proactive is necessary.

by **Evan Maguire**

On August 30, Maj. Gen. Chris Donahue, the last “boots on the ground” in Afghanistan, stepped onto a C-17 cargo plane, ending U.S. presence in the country after two decades. Within a day, President Joe Biden delivered a speech on the withdrawal from Afghanistan. The withdrawal was a catastrophic failure, so explaining the horrible situation was a tough sell. Biden’s speech predictably flopped, but the speechwriters managed to make a few salvageable points. The most salient was this: “the world is changing. We’re engaged in a serious competition with China. We’re dealing with the challenges on multiple fronts with Russia.” Both China and Russia are emboldened by American failure in Afghanistan, but that is not our only weak point. An often overlooked area of geostrategic importance is the Arctic, and if the United States does not get serious about having operational capacity in the region, we will likely face future disaster and be outcompeted by Russia, or even China.

While there is significant debate on the impacts of climate change, and how much of it is man-made, its reality is most obvious in the Arctic. Since 1979, summer sea ice coverage has decreased by around 14 percent per decade, and there are no signs that this trend will reverse. This decrease in ice cover has made the waters of the Arctic more navigable. Some estimate that by 2050, there will be periods of the year when even the North Pole is no longer covered by locked ice. One would think that less ice would make maritime transit safer, but it creates new challenges. A lack of solid ice leads to more free-moving icebergs, which threaten offshore drilling operations and vessels, particularly ones that are not properly equipped and designed to operate in the Arctic environment. Constantly shifting ice also leads to the rapid obsolescence of ice charts and the need for highly skilled helmsmen for vessels navigating the Arctic.

The United States has little ability to respond if a man-made or natural disaster occurs in the Arctic. Icebreakers are needed to clear sea lanes to ensure safe conditions in the region, and the United States only has two functional vessels that meet these needs, the USCG Polar Star and the USCGC Healy. Polar Star is a heavy icebreaker that was commissioned in 1976. It consistently deals with onboard fires and mechanical failures and will soon be inoperable. Healy is a medium icebreaker and can only crack through about 8 feet of ice whereas a heavy icebreaker can crack through 10 feet. While the Healy is in better shape than the Polar Star, it is not without issue. In late 2020, Healy had to



Evan Maguire is The American Spectator’s Development Manager.

Northern Lights Patrol. *Aurora borealis* is observed from Coast Guard Cutter Healy Oct. 4, 2015, while conducting science operations in the southern Arctic Ocean. Healy is underway in the Arctic Ocean in support of the National Science Foundation-funded Arctic GEOTRACES, part of an international effort to study the distribution of trace elements in the world's oceans. (Department of Defense/U.S. Coast Guard Petty Officer 2nd Class Cory J. Mendenhall).



abandon an Arctic mission due to an electrical fire that damaged propulsion systems; it took nearly a year to get it operational again. Healy will likely be the only operable U.S. military icebreaker within a year or so, and with the possibility of obligations at both the northern and southern poles, the U.S. would need to decide whether to commission a new icebreaker or to rely on foreign support.

The United States' main regional competitor, Russia, is far more equipped to operate in the region. Russia has a fleet of over 30 government and quasi-government-operated icebreakers, including a nuclear-powered vessel, the first in a scheduled series of atomic mega-icebreakers. With this fleet, the Russians have a strong operational capacity in the polar regions. Russia has planned ahead and recognizes that the Arctic will likely become central to its economy in the long-term future.

Russia has this large fleet to help manage the underutilized and possibly most important trade route in the world, the Northern Sea Route. The Northern Sea Route, stretching from Asia to Europe over Russia's northern coast, is more accessible than it has been in the past. This route cuts time and fuel use compared to the traditional Asia to Europe route through the Suez Canal. It also avoids volatile regions like the Gulf of Aden and the South China Sea. Russia claims sovereignty over the Northern Sea Route as internal waters, while the United States and many other countries consider it an international waterway. But without an American ability to operate in the region, Russia can dictate what passes along the trade route. China, which has close ties with Russia, will greatly benefit from the growing trade on the route and is building an icebreaker fleet of its own. In 2020, a year of

global economic downturn, tonnage that transited the Northern Sea Route grew by 83 percent, reinforcing ties between Russia and China, making them wealthier, and increasing European reliance on both of those countries. With time, these problems will only become more deeply entrenched and harder to respond to.

The United States has been kicking the can down the road on its icebreaker fleet for far too long. In recent years, Congress has mandated the acquisition of three polar security cutters (heavy icebreakers) and three Arctic security cutters (medium icebreakers). The Coast Guard commandant, Adm. Karl Schultz, recommends the U.S. needs six heavies, but so far Congress has only allocated enough funding for two, about \$1.8 billion. The price tag is around \$1 billion for the first icebreaker and decreases with each new one. This might seem expensive, but when one considers that the U.S. spent around \$300 million a day in Afghanistan during that war, it is quite reasonable. The U.S. has significant ground to make up compared to Russia in Arctic operability, but it is not too late. The longer bureaucratic red tape and defense contractor negotiations slow things down, the more likely an event occurs at one of the poles that requires an American response.

The polar regions, particularly the Arctic, will be increasingly important in the coming decades. While the United States should carefully reflect on our past 20 years in Afghanistan, we should also look forward to the next 20. America should never be as woefully unprepared for the next crisis as it was with the Afghan withdrawal, nor should we be outcompeted economically.

Building operational capacity in the Arctic is one small and cost-effective way the United States can maintain its global power. ❧



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Marxist Greed

Those who fatten their bank accounts with other people's money are perfect practitioners of the ideology.

by Paul Kengor



Paul Kengor is professor of political science at Grove City College. He is also senior director at the college's Institute for Faith & Freedom, and a senior editor and regular contributor to The American Spectator.

Black Lives Matter founder Patrisse Cullors took a hit over the past year because of controversy over her financial dealings, including purchases of several new expensive homes in predominantly white neighborhoods. Pretty much everyone who read about the controversy immediately pointed to the hypocrisy of an avowed Marxist like Cullors filling her pockets with money raised by BLM.

But before drilling down on that point, it's worth fleshing out (or trying to) what Cullors spent and was earning. Which homes? At what price? How much salary? How much of it was drawn from her work for BLM?

Well, no one knows. In fact, precisely those questions became a scandal within BLM. Having written about Cullors and her Marxism previously for *The American Spectator*, I was contacted by several sources researching the subject, and none were able to find anything about Cullors' salary or financial situation. BLM's own staff and supporters were unaware, to their great frustration. That lack of transparency surely is what recently prompted Cullors to resign from her position as executive director of the hugely influential organization she co-founded, the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation. She was almost certainly pressured to step down by members of BLM troubled by her lack of financial openness.

In response to widespread public criticisms, Cullors lashed out, crying (yes, you guessed it) "racism." She denounced criticisms as the product of "right-wing media." She protested: "The fact that the right-wing media is trying to create hysteria around my spending is, frankly, racist and sexist."

Would that apply to Black Lives Matter, Ms. Cullors?

"It's really sad because it makes people doubt the validity of the movement and overlook the fact that it's the people that carry this movement," said Hawk Newsome, head of Black Lives Matter Greater New York City, which called for "an independent investigation" of Cullors. "We need black firms and black accountants to go in there and find out where the money is going."

Newsome, of course, was precisely right. Last February, the Associated Press (that devil's den of "racist and sexist" right-wingers) broke an exclusive on BLM's finances. The AP reported on the enormous sum BLM had raised in 2020 alone, namely \$90

million. The AP noted that this revelation “marks the first time in the movement’s nearly eight-year history that BLM leaders have revealed a detailed look at their finances” (even then, the story didn’t have a lot of specifics). The AP quoted none other than Patrisse Cullors:

BLM co-founder Patrisse Cullors told the AP that the foundation is focused on a “need to reinvest into Black communities.” “One of our biggest goals this year is taking the dollars we were able to raise in 2020 and building out the institution we’ve been trying to build for the last seven and a half years,” she said in an interview.

Cullors, who was already active in her native Los Angeles, where she created her own social justice organization, Power and Dignity Now, became the global foundation’s full-time executive director last year.

And yet, as the AP noted, BLM chapters were frustrated at their lack of knowledge about these funds and how they were distributed:

According to foundation records shared with the AP, several chapters, including in the cities of Washington, Philadelphia and Chicago, were notified last year of their eligibility to receive \$500,000 each in funding under a multiyear agreement. Only one BLM group in Denver has signed the agreement and received its funds in September.

A group of 10 chapters, called the #BLM10, rejected the foundation’s funding offer last year and complained publicly about the lack of donor transparency. Foundation leaders say only a few of the 10 chapters are recognized as network affiliates.

In a letter released Nov. 30, the #BLM10 claimed most chapters have received little to no financial resources from the BLM movement since its launch in 2013. That has had adverse consequences for the scope of their organizing work, local chapter leaders told the AP.

The chapters are simply asking for an equal say in “this thing that our names are attached to, that they are doing in our names,” said April Goggans, organizer of Black Lives Matter DC, which is part of the #BLM10 along with groups in Indianapolis, Oklahoma City, San Diego, Hudson Valley, New York, and elsewhere.

“We are BLM. We built this, each one of us,” she said.

As the AP suggested, Cullors herself was integral to this lack of transparency. Not coincidentally, shortly after this AP report, the public began learning of Cullors’ multiple home purchases. “As protests broke out across the country in the name of Black Lives Matter,” reported the *New York Post*, “the group’s co-founder went on a real estate buying binge, snagging four high-end homes for \$3.2 million in the US alone, according to property records.”

Among them, one purchase was a \$1.4 million property in Topanga Canyon outside Los Angeles, and another was a very nice “custom ranch” resting on 3.2 acres of rural woods in Georgia. The *New York Post* also provided details on how Cullors and her wife looked into an opulent celebrity beachfront home at “The Albany” resort in the Bahamas. The *Post* reported:

**Greedy Marxists
rounded up those who
resisted, while enriching
themselves with the
money and property
they confiscated.**

Patrisse Khan-Cullors, 37, also eyed property in the Bahamas at an ultra-exclusive resort where Justin Timberlake and Tiger Woods both have homes, The Post has learned. Luxury apartments and townhouses at the beachfront Albany resort outside Nassau are priced between \$5 million and \$20 million, according to a local agent.

The self-described Marxist last month purchased a \$1.4 million home on a secluded road a short drive from Malibu in Los Angeles, according to a report. The 2,370-square-foot property features “soaring ceilings, skylights and plenty of windows” with canyon views. The Topanga Canyon homestead, which includes two houses on a quarter-acre, is just one of three homes Khan-Cullors owns in the Los Angeles area, public records show.

These properties do not resemble the “Black communities” that Cullors has long called on BLM supporters to invest in. In December 2016, BLM launched a major “Buy Black” campaign (partnering with an expensive New York ad firm) that called for black Americans to make purchases from other black Americans and to invest in black-owned businesses. “[I]t is more important than ever to buy local and buy Black,” said the campaign message.

That is precisely not what Patrisse Cullors did with her home purchases.

Again, the hypocrisy is rich. But of special interest here in this article, there’s also the stark hypocrisy of a self-proclaimed “super-versed” “trained Marxist” engaging in such opulent behavior apart from the masses to whom she preaches income equality. The double standard is not lost upon BLM staffers. Newsome underscored the hypocrisy: “If you go around calling yourself a socialist, you have to ask how much of her own personal money is going to charitable causes.”

And yet, in truth, Cullors’ behavior is nothing odd for a socialist or communist. Stacking up wealth is something that communist leaders have always done.

That fact might shock left-wingers who don’t know history, or young people led by their left-wing professors to believe that Marxism is about sharing and fighting greedy capitalists. But in reality, Cullors’ behavior is not at all atypical of Marxist leaders.

The degree to which that is true would require a book to detail all the disgusting examples, whether leaders of Marxist regimes or Marxist organizations, from Soviet leaders and their government-provided dachas on the Black Sea, to modern-day Russian oligarchs and nomenklatura, to Chinese despots like Mao Zedong, to Nicolai and Elena Ceaușescu in Romania, to the crazy Kims in North Korea, and on and on. Readers of *The American Spectator* reflexively nod as they read these lines. They know. For those not aware, let me give just three brief examples: Fidel Castro, today’s communist Chinese leadership, and an old favorite, Gus Hall, who ran Communist Party USA from 1959-2000, and whose case seems particularly apt to this article.

Greedy, Commie-Style

As for Fidel Castro, at the time of his death, *Forbes* magazine estimated his net worth at \$900 million. Year after year, he was regularly ranked one of the world’s 10 wealthiest rulers. Second



only to Fidel in Cuba was his crony brother, Raul, who succeeded him as commie king of the island. At the time of Fidel's death, all Cubans were set at an annual salary of \$120 per year, from doctors to teachers to maintenance workers to baseball players. That is what equal redistribution of wealth looks like under Marxist leaders — everyone is equally poor, with the grand exception of the leaders, i.e., the one percent. You couldn't own a home, mango tree, or boat in Cuba, but Fidel himself damn well owned the island.

When Fidel croaked in 2016, Raul took over as the top banana in Havana. Raul's net worth is estimated at \$100-150 million. How does that measure up against the Cuban masses fighting for social justice? Though data is notoriously hard to pin down, it's safe to say that the average monthly salary in Cuba today is between \$30 and \$50. Yes, stunning.

As for today's China, leader Xi Jinping is worth a ton of money. It is difficult to separate his direct personal net worth from that of his family, but estimates peg him personally in the range of hundreds of millions of dollars, and some price him at \$1.2-1.5 billion. One financial website reports his net worth at \$1.2 billion, with a yearly salary at \$22 million in 2021. Xi's family is a selfish cabal of filthy rich communist fat-cats. The levels of nepotism and outright graft are perhaps unparalleled anywhere in the world today, as they stroke each other with the cash they plunder from the Chinese masses.

Xi's hypocrisy is typical of Chi-comm officials. According to the *New York Times*, "At least four families among the nine-man Politburo Standing Committee that ruled the country from 2007 to 2012 each owned or controlled documented assets in excess of \$150 million, including relatives of Mr. Xi, former Prime Minister

Wen Jiabao, Mr. Zhou and Jia Qinglin, the former fourth-ranked party member."

Among them, former Prime Minister Wen Jiabao's family has a net worth of \$2.7 billion. According to the *Guardian*, Wen's 90-year-old mother "not only left poverty behind, she became outright rich, at least on paper, according to corporate and regulatory records. Just one investment in her name, in a large Chinese financial services company, had a value of \$120 million five years ago, the records show." The same is true for (among others) the likes of Li Zhanshu, chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, and Wang Yang, chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. While they praise Mao and Marx, they nab cushy multi-million-dollar luxury homes in Hong Kong.

All of this, of course, stands in marked contrast to the average Chinese salary in 2021, which is about \$15,000.

Closer to home, a favorite example is old Gus Hall, who, like Patrisse Cullors, was a prominent American Marxist. He ran the Communist Party USA for over 40 years as his personal fiefdom. As detailed by Hall's No. 2, Morris Childs (laid out in John Barron's fascinating 1996 biography, *Operation Solo*), the Kremlin illegally smuggled millions of dollars in annual funding to CPUSA during Hall's tenure. The total rose to \$2,775,000 by 1980. The FBI knew the precise amount because it counted every bill at a halfway house in New York prior to when Morris (a double agent serving the FBI) deposited it in safe deposit boxes for Gus Hall, who then proceeded to fill his pockets as desired.

"Most people disliked Hall," wrote Barron of Hall's Marxist cohorts. "In fact, Morris knew of no one who liked him." But

Hall certainly liked the Soviets — his Kremlin sugar-daddies. As Morris Childs noted, the primary reason is that the Soviets were providing “what Hall craved most — money.” Hall was “by nature exploitative and avaricious,” he added. Morris Childs realized that the more money Communist Party USA could extract from the Soviets, “the more Gus will be at liberty to pocket.”

Like members of BLM with Patrisse Cullors, suspicious CPUSA members had no idea how much income Hall was pulling from his leadership of the organization.

Greedy Karl Marx and Marxism

Of course, the notion that Marxists are greedy flies in the face of sappy American millennials who think that capitalism is greedy and Marxism/socialism is bereft of such vice; it’s about sharing and helping the poor. Nothing is further from the truth.

It’s crucial to understand that Karl Marx himself and his Marxism were and are based on greed. It’s not merely that some Marxist leaders are covetous criminals; the leaders are attracted to an ideology that is based on coveting and envy. Both Karl Marx the person and Marxist ideology were all about money. Marx and his materialistic ideology — one that denies the supernatural and immaterial world — were utterly obsessed with capital. Money and property are the alpha and omega of Marxism. It’s so ironic that communists blast the wealthy for being allegedly obsessed with money and material things when, in fact, communists are obsessed with money and material things.

As for Karl Marx himself, I could lay this out at great length and have done so in books, but a few words for here:

It’s quite revealing that some of Marx’s slimiest anti-Semitic comments accused Jews of greed and haggling. “What is the worldly cult of the Jew?” asked Marx in his ugly 1844 essay “On the Jewish Question.” His answer: “Haggling. What is his worldly god? Money.”

Ironically, it was Karl Marx himself who treated money as his worldly god. Marx’s nasty statements about Jews are more a diagnosis of himself. “Money is the jealous god of Israel before

whom no other god may exist,” growled Marx. “The bill of exchange is the actual god of the Jew. His god is only an illusory bill of exchange.”

No, Karl, you are obsessed with money. Money is your god.

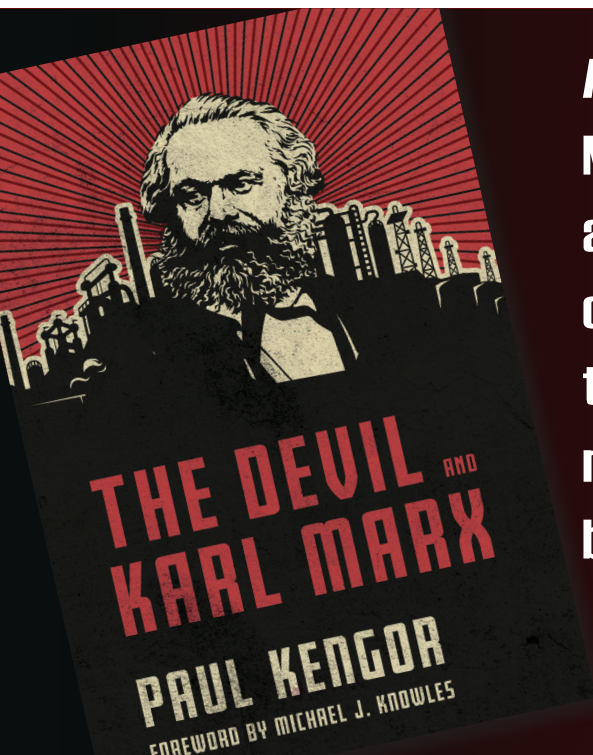
And then there’s Marxist ideology. Look at what Marxism wants from you. It wants nothing less than all your property. Marx and Engels stated in the *Communist Manifesto*: “the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property.” Many Marxists and socialists and “democratic socialists” today fuss over to the degree to which Marx wanted to remove or limit property, but in the *Manifesto*, he and Engels doubled down with their sweeping statements. “You are horrified at our intending to do away with private property;” they wrote. “[Y]ou reproach us with intending to do away with your property. Precisely so; that is just what we intend.”

They also wanted your income and even your inheritance. Point three in their 10-point plan in the *Manifesto* called for nothing less than “abolition of all right of inheritance.”

And if taking away your land, property, and inheritance wasn’t enough, they also wanted to take away where you lived. Here’s point nine in their plan: “gradual abolition of all the distinction between town and country by a more equitable distribution of the population over the country.” Chew that one over: Marx and Engels and pals wanted to redistribute not only your property but you yourself.

Is this not greed? It became government greed by gunpoint, by Gulag. Fellow greedy Marxists rounded up those who resisted, while enriching themselves with the money and property they confiscated.

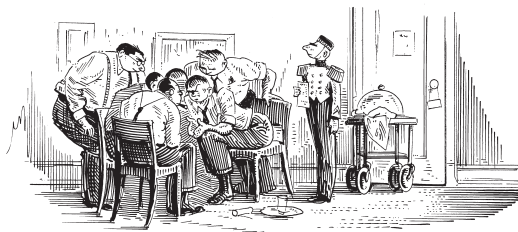
In short, Marx and Marxism are based on greed. Hence it is no surprise that it attracts greedy people who, in turn, engage in greed. Modern Marxists who fatten their bank accounts with other people’s money, demanding more and more of it while they buy homes and lots of stuff, are not at all being hypocritical to Marxist ideology. Rather, they are being perfect practitioners. 🐼



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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Is Pegasus Peeping on Your iPhone?

The Israeli technology has reportedly been used to spy on journalists and politicians across continents.

by J. Arthur Bloom

The biggest spy scandal of the year has been all but ignored in conservative media. Apart from a freelance story in the *Washington Examiner*, a conservative reader will be entirely in the dark about the scandal embroiling Israeli cybersecurity firm NSO Group.

At the heart of it is a winged horse, Pegasus, the name for the program that can crack iPhones, which apparently has been used to target journalists, activists, and politicians in more than a dozen countries, with significant implications for the free political process. Everyone who's seen *House of Cards* knows how a little well-placed blackmail can move the world, but what if that blackmail could be obtained without even being in the same room as the target, or without the target having even clicked on a malware link?

The company, while based in Israel, licensed its software to dozens of countries, including India, Hungary, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, and Bahrain.

J. Arthur Bloom is the former online editor of the American Conservative.

NSO maintains its software is used only to track terrorists and criminals, and its misuse is due to rogue clients. But this is an explanation many find hard to believe.

In India, the NSO Group scandal has reached a fever pitch, and the high court is weighing an official inquiry. Pegasus software has been found on the phones of opposition party figures as well as on the phone of the former president of the Indian National Congress, Rahul Gandhi. This would be like finding out that Peter Thiel — or Richard Branson — hacked Nancy Pelosi's phone for Trump while he was in the White House. Absolutely explosive.

"If there is a serious abuse of human rights, a targeting of a journalist . . . just for him *per se* being a journalist, we would just shut down the system," NSO's general counsel told NPR in August. According to French intelligence, journalists, including a *France 24* broadcaster, were targeted.

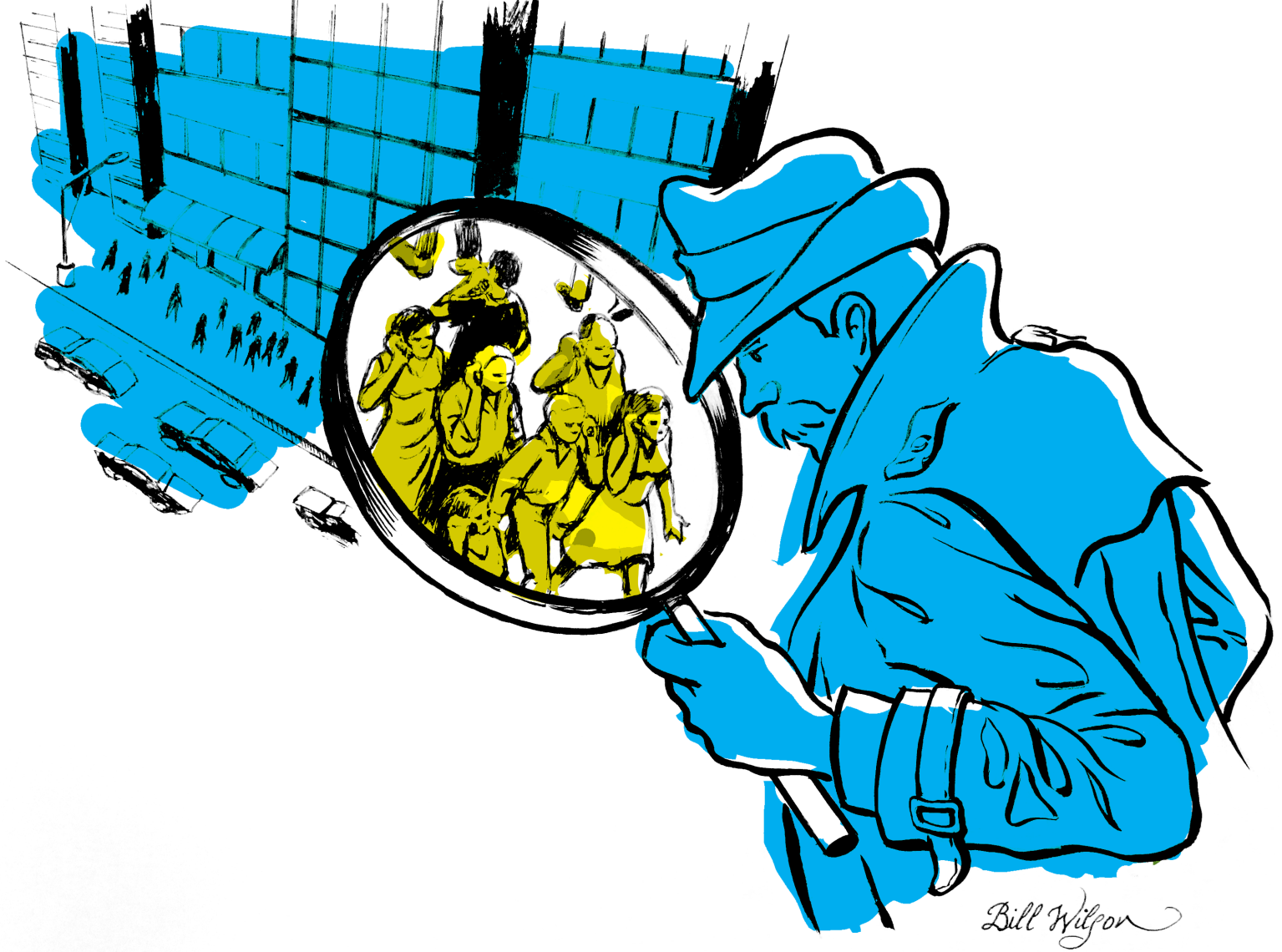
This spyware has very real implications: friends and the fiancée of Jamal Khashoggi, the journalist and operator sawed into pieces and tossed in a bag at the Saudi Embassy in Istanbul, had NSO's spyware on

their phones. French President Emmanuel Macron reportedly had the Pegasus software on his phone, and it has been alleged that the hack of Jeff Bezos several years ago involved Pegasus as well.

In August, Canada's CitizenLab released a report regarding nine Bahraini activists targeted with zero-click attacks. "In all of the cases, hackers used NSO's 'zero-click' iMessage exploit, a powerful attack that requires no phishing and merely takes advantage of security weaknesses in the messaging app's code to compromise a device," wrote *Gizmodo*. Several outlets published explainers on how to check one's phone for invasive code.

The scandal exploded into the public eye this July when a list of 50,000 phone numbers purporting to be a set of NSO targets was leaked to a consortium of journalists. It's impossible to tell which ones were successfully hacked without examining the phones themselves, but samples indicate that about half to two-thirds of the targets were penetrated.

NSO Group has come under investigation in Israel, and its offices



were inspected in late July. “You didn’t know about the software’s very wide use against dozens of journalists in dozens of countries, to know what they are doing?” asked an Israeli radio host. “You didn’t know that the ruler of Dubai used Pegasus to track his daughter and wife? . . . You also didn’t know that your software was installed in the phone of the fiancée of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, who was murdered by representatives of the regime in Riyadh? All that you didn’t know?”

In the United States, NSO’s spyware has raised eyebrows among big tech companies. Amazon cut off its web services in July, and in December, Google, Dell, Microsoft, and Cisco filed a brief in Facebook’s lawsuit against the firm. The Facebook lawsuit centers around 1,400 WhatsApp users who were allegedly targeted by NSO’s attacks. The lawsuit began during the winter of 2019, which was around the same time that Reuters reported the FBI was probing NSO Group.

In late July of this year, Mexican authorities alleged a kickback scheme involving the NSO contract. *Pitchbook* reported that Novalpina Capital, the majority owner of NSO, was dissolving, and about a week later it was reported in the *Times of Israel* that the Oregon pension fund was reconsidering its investment. Four Democratic senators also proposed blacklisting the company.

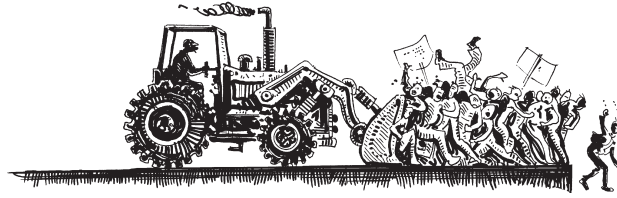
Around the same time, just after shutting down all other inquiries, NSO Group CEO Shalev Hulio gave an interview to *Israel Hayom*, a right-wing daily in Israel, arguing he saw a “guiding hand” behind the investigation, “either Qatar or BDS, or both.” He also spoke with *Forbes*. Other analysts have put out the line that concern over the Pegasus scandal is motivated by the BDS movement.

The *Forbes* writer says:

Frustratingly for NSO’s detractors, the Pegasus Project left some wiggle room for Hulio

in referencing a list of what was alleged to be a list of 50,000 “potential” targets of NSO clients. Believed to have first been obtained by French nonprofit Forbidden Stories, the list remains something of a mystery: Neither Forbidden Stories nor its media partners have explained where the list came from, what it is or how it’s linked to NSO.

It’s true that the origin of the list is obscure — also possibly not exhaustive, crucially not including any American residents — but one could speculate. There are Canadian investigators looking into Pegasus targets, and French intelligence has been openly critical. It seems reasonable to infer that the source was someone the U.S. was in a position to influence, given the lack of Americans. There’s a big lawsuit in the U.K. and by some of the U.S.’s biggest tech companies. All of this suggests the Five Eyes (an intelligence sharing alliance consisting of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) as the most likely source of the list. 🕵️



COVID Zero Is the Technocracy's Test Run

Australia embraces the science of control.

by John Jiang

At the beginning of this September, *The Atlantic* — a mouthpiece of the progressive professional managerial class if there ever was one — ran an unexpected article criticizing Australia for its COVID-19 policies. The piece, titled “Australia Traded Away Too Much Liberty,” ponders whether the country’s eliminationist approach toward the virus has rendered it undeserving of the title of liberal democracy.

The author, Conor Friedersdorf, is particularly critical of a proposed app that would force Australians in home quarantine to take photos of themselves at random intervals throughout the day, calling it a proposal “as Orwellian as any in the free world.” I was not aware of this app. From my desk here in Sydney, however, I have become intimately familiar with many of the other emergency measures taken by the Australian government. Masks are mandated everywhere, including outdoors, and straying too far from one’s home without a state-approved excuse is punishable with a \$5,000 fine.

Residents of Sydney are now also obliged to check themselves into and out of a government app whenever they enter or exit a building. Consequently, the ruling bureaucracy of Australia’s largest city may now possess one of the world’s most comprehensive systems for tracking the habits and locations of civilians. Enforcement is questionable, and highly contingent on how the store clerk is feeling on any particular day, but an earnest effort is being made to ensure that no Australian moves, shops, or eats without the state knowing about it.

These ever-stricter policies have become necessary to maintain the delicate state of “COVID Zero” coveted by Australian and New Zealand politicians. At the beginning of the pandemic, the relative isolation of the two island nations allowed them to raise the figurative drawbridges and shut out the rest of the world, with New Zealand becoming one of a handful of countries in the world to successfully eliminate the virus after its first wave.

What initially looked like a blessing, however, has become a dilemma. It has by now become obvious that COVID-19, unlike the Spanish flu or more recent respiratory disease outbreaks, will probably not simply burn itself out and disappear; the term “endemic” is entering media discourse as experts grapple with the possibility of COVID-19 becoming as quotidian as the seasonal flu. This has left policymakers



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in Canberra and Auckland wondering whether their countries can man the fortress walls forever. If they let the drawbridge back down, would that invalidate the past year of effort and sacrifice? Politicians who have staked their reputations on a flawless COVID-19 record, such as New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, are asking themselves that question.

Regardless of what the final answer turns out to be, it will mean an expansion of the technocratic bent of the state. Bureaucracy will be necessary to enforce compliance with vaccines and booster shots. Furthermore, if the current outbreak in heavily vaccinated Iceland is any indication, vaccination will not bring about the end of viral circulation and will therefore most likely coexist with, rather than supplant, current surveillance and control measures.

In the broader picture, however, Australia has been merely the grimmest example of a worldwide phenomenon. *The Atlantic* has burned Canberra, but what about Washington? The magazine, along with the rest of the media, cheered on lockdowns and stay-at-home orders last year. It bears saying over and over again that such policies were quite literally unprecedented in human history: not even the much deadlier Spanish flu pandemic provoked such a response. Many lines have been crossed since early 2020, and not just by Australia.

A late August piece in the fashionable left-leaning *Tablet* magazine made a similar argument, pointing out that mass coercive measures had previously been unthinkable to national governments before suddenly becoming the norm around March of last year.

What changed? The author gives the obvious answer: China led the way with its response, and in doing so, he argues, transformed the unthinkable into inevitable. It is indeed the case that Beijing's whole-of-state effort to clamp down on the virus captivated the world and provided early inspiration to officials in the West. By the middle of last year, lockdown-free Sweden had

become the black sheep of Europe for simply not going along with a policy agenda that would have seemed insane in 2019.

On the other hand, accusing China of having essentially hypnotized the world may obfuscate a larger trend. The lockdown in Wuhan was lifted in April 2020 after having been in effect for only a few months, and life in the People's Republic has attained a degree of normalcy that most Western countries have yet to return to. The author's blaming of Chinese infiltration into Western decision-making bodies is also dubious in the case

of Australia, whose government is actively working to disentangle itself from its neighbor in Asia.

Putting the blame on Chinese influence mistakenly absolves policymakers in Australia and the United States of their role in pushing technocratic management upon their citizens. Lockdown policies have been enforced not because the Chinese Communist Party willed it, but simply because they can be enforced; because the nexus of growing technological prowess and sociological theory has made such a thing possible.

The issue of technocracy has been the wheelhouse of many philosophers, from Max Weber to Michel Foucault and Jacques Ellul. For the purposes of this piece, however, it suffices to say that the governments of the free world are too large and insufficiently democratic. What is happening in Australia is a swollen bureaucracy, originally raised for some nebulous purpose ("safeguarding public health"), and now running wild with an ever-growing arsenal of technological tools at its disposal.

John von Neumann, the 20th century's greatest scientific genius after Einstein, once predicted that "science will, in the future, turn increasingly from problems of intensity, substance, and energy, to those of structure, organization, information and control." This new science has arrived in force, and we the people are its unwitting test subjects. 🦋

It has by now become obvious that COVID-19, unlike the Spanish flu or more recent respiratory disease outbreaks, will probably not simply burn itself out and disappear.

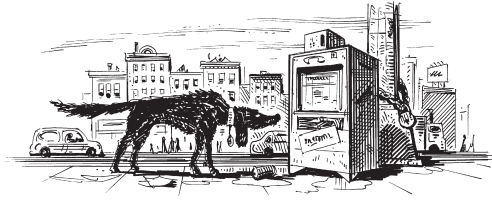


Vehicles in Coolangatta, Australia wait at a coronavirus checkpoint to cross the state border into Queensland on July 19, 2020. (Igot Corovic/Shutterstock)

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Investigating the Human Trafficking of Aborted Infants

Kamala Harris' actions increasingly appear like obstruction of justice.

by David Daleiden



David Daleiden is the founder and president of the Center for Medical Progress, responsible for the undercover video series exposing trafficking of aborted fetal body parts at Planned Parenthood.

The human trafficking of aborted infants and their body parts for commercial and experimental gain shocks the conscience and horrifies Americans across the political spectrum. It sheds heartbreaking, clarifying light on the true meaning of state-sponsored, industrial-scale abortion in our country. The hearts, lungs, livers, and brains of aborted infants are only valuable for Planned Parenthood to sell or the National Institutes of Health to buy precisely because they are human beings just like us.

I started the Center for Medical Progress as a nonprofit investigative reporting and citizen journalism organization to monitor and report on bioethical issues that impact human dignity. My work is best known for the 2015 undercover video series which documented Planned Parenthood's highest-level leadership callously negotiating the harvesting and sale of aborted fetal body parts. This reporting exposed illegal transfers of aborted human fetal tissue in violation of 42 U.S.C. § 289g-2. It involved coercion and abuse of pregnant patients through violations of informed consent laws, the use of illegal partial-birth abortions, and even infanticide in the trafficking of later gestation human fetuses for experimental use.

My undercover videos with Planned Parenthood leadership identified the criminal companies DaVinci Biosciences and DV Biologics, who pleaded guilty to illegally selling human fetal tissue for valuable consideration from abortions at Planned Parenthood in southern California. Those two companies were shut down in a \$7.8 million settlement with the Orange County district attorney. The district attorney credited my reporting with prompting the successful prosecution.

The undercover videos also established violations of medical ethics and standards at Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast in Texas, which the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit described as a willingness to use illegal partial-birth abortions to sell fetal body parts.

The videos galvanized advocacy for new regulatory reforms and increased public scrutiny of government-funded experiments on aborted infants. Congressional investigations in the Senate Judiciary Committee and House Select Investigative Panel issued dozens of criminal and regulatory referrals for Planned Parenthood and its business partners, leading to a multi-state FBI and U.S. Department of Justice criminal investigation that sources say remains open.

Unsurprisingly, Planned Parenthood and its allies have been furious at this level of exposure and have retaliated viciously. Planned Parenthood and the National Abortion Federation filed combined federal civil lawsuits against me in San Francisco in front of Judge William Orrick III, who helped open, run, and fund a Planned Parenthood abortion referral clinic. Orrick's clinic sent pregnant women to the very harvesting clinics my videos exposed — yet he refused to recuse himself. He orchestrated a \$16 million judgment for Planned Parenthood and an injunction against the release of damning undercover footage from the NAF trade shows.

Meanwhile, as attorney general of California, Vice President Kamala Harris had my home raided to seize the videos, my means of publishing, and my attorney-client privileged communications — all of which her office appears to have immediately turned over to Planned Parenthood and NAF to help them win their civil lawsuits.

These cases are now trudging towards appeal under the weight of their own overreaches and contradictions. But the more we learn, it increasingly seems like Planned Parenthood, NAF, and Kamala Harris' abuses of power were not just about silencing me. They were also about obstruction of justice in fetal trafficking crimes.

Fetal trafficking and experimentation sadly did not end after my videos. The NIAID's Dr. Anthony Fauci is responsible for nearly 60 percent of the NIH's funding of fetal experimentation. Recently, NIAID-funded scientists at the University of Pittsburgh took scalps off the heads of 5-month-old aborted infants and stitched them onto the backs of lab rats to keep them growing for drug testing. You can actually see tiny baby hairs growing on the scalps on the lab rats. Last month, the Center for Medical Progress began reporting on the university's NIH application to become a "distribution hub" for 6-month-old aborted fetal kidneys. The university advertised it would use labor induction abortions to get the body parts and "minimize" the time without blood

circulation to the kidneys, recording the precise moment blood flow was lost. These are either partial-birth abortions or infanticide.

And hotbeds for fetal experimentation like the University of Pittsburgh, the University of California—San Francisco, and the University of California—San Diego often double as abortion training sites. They have deeply enmeshed affiliations with the biggest Planned Parenthood abortion clinics, whose providers and facilities frequently provide the fetuses.

Even if the injustice of fetal trafficking has not gone away, reporting on it is amplifying the resounding clarion call for justice for the vulnerable women and infants that abortion preys upon. The Supreme Court is now addressing *Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* in the face of so many indisputable facts about the humanity of infants in the womb. States like Texas demonstrate our great awakening to these civilizational imperatives.

If a baby is human enough to be sold for body parts for experimentation, he or she is human enough to be protected by law. 🐾

If a baby is human enough to be sold for body parts for experimentation, he or she is human enough to be protected by law.

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FIGHTING FOR CITIZEN JOURNALISM
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CMP
The Center for Medical Progress
EST. 2013

The Center for Medical Progress is a group of citizen journalists dedicated to monitoring and reporting on medical ethics and advances. We are concerned about contemporary bioethical issues that impact human dignity, and we oppose any interventions, procedures, and experiments that exploit the unequal legal status of any class of human beings.

cmp.org [centerformedicalprogress](https://www.facebook.com/centerformedicalprogress) [CtrMedProgress](https://twitter.com/CtrMedProgress) [centerformedprogress](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)



An Interview With James O’Keefe

I started off with nothing but a camera and a passion for truth.



How did you get started as a journalist?

While a student at Rutgers University, I founded the newspaper *The Centurion* with the goal of exposing wrongdoing on my college campus. My first experience in national journalism was in 2009 when I went undercover inside ACORN offices across the country to expose fraud and rampant corruption. Those undercover videos made national headlines and led to congressional action. Under a Democratic House of Representatives, Democratic Senate, and President Obama, the federal government voted to fully defund ACORN, which led to its bankruptcy soon thereafter.

What animates your work?

What has motivated me from the very beginning is the pursuit of truth. From a very early age, I noticed that our media was broken and no longer pursuing journalism with the purpose of informing the public. Project Veritas’ work is to do the job that the media refuses to do, with no profit imperative, deception, lies, or propaganda.

What do you feel has been your biggest contribution to independent journalism?

In 2019, we pioneered the “Be Brave. Do Something.” insiders program that enables whistleblowers from public and private institutions to come forward safely when they have evidence of corruption that the American people have a right to know about. The powerful accounts that Project Veritas has published since the program’s inception have arguably been our biggest contribution to independent journalism.

James O’Keefe is the founder and CEO of Project Veritas.

Which of your projects has been the most rewarding for you personally?

Recently, Project Veritas filed several lawsuits against media and Big Tech organizations that defamed us. We are suing the *New York Times*, CNN, and Twitter, to name a few. We recently won against the *New York Times* on the motion to dismiss, which puts us in a unique category of plaintiffs to defeat the *New York Times* in such a significant ruling in the past few decades. I have found that exposing them through litigation and deposition can be equally or even more effective than the other forms we currently employ. We have now established PV Legal, which calls on anyone who has been defamed by powerful organizations to partner with us and file lawsuits to expose media wrongdoing.

You have played a big role in the fight for election integrity. Where do you see the focus of this effort going as we anticipate the midterm elections and the 2024 presidential race?

Project Veritas intends to lead the fight against voter fraud as we have been since our founding. Going into the 2022 and 2024 federal elections, we will have journalists on the ground and whistleblowers coming forward, feeding us crucial information in real-time. We look to focus our efforts on battleground states as well as states where voter fraud is most rampant.

Which investigative journalists past and present do you most admire?

Gunter Wallraff, Nellie Bly, Ida Tarbell, and Mike Wallace

Where is the line for investigative journalism? Is there something you won't do to get a story?

Project Veritas will never break the law to get a story. We believe that undercover journalism is always ethical, regardless of the accusations that have been made against it. On Project Veritas' website, there is an extensive list of ethical values that must be followed by all employees.

What advice would you give to young journalists who want to do investigative work?

I advise young Americans who aspire to become journalists to be unafraid. Anyone with a camera can be a journalist, all it takes is courage and willpower. I started off with nothing but a camera and a passion for truth. Project Veritas would not exist if I had not put my blood, sweat, tears, and reputation into this mission — and it's been well worth it.

You have a new book, *American Muckraker: Rethinking Journalism for the 21st Century*, coming out. What can readers expect?

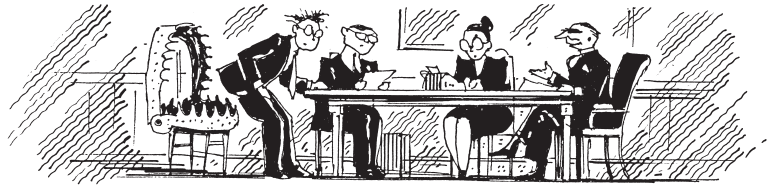
American Muckraker is an eye-opening glimpse into the state of journalism as seen by the "muckrakers" who defend press freedoms in a brave new world of video journalism. Readers can expect an academic book with inspiring true stories as well as philosophical knowledge of the ethics and history of journalism. It is meant to set a bedrock foundation in this field — cited in academic circles — about what it really means to be a muckraking journalist in the 21st century.

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AMERICAN MUCKRAKER
RETHINKING JOURNALISM FOR THE 21ST CENTURY
JAMES O'KEEFE
FOUNDER OF PROJECT VERITAS



How to Fight Wokeness

Six strategies for writers, activists, and political leaders.

by Christopher F. Rufo



In the past year, my reporting on critical race theory in America’s institutions has helped catapult the issue onto the national stage. My reporting inspired a presidential order, a fierce public debate, and legislation in nine states impacting 75 million Americans. *The New Yorker* called me the “conservative activist [who] invented the conflict over critical race theory.” While this might be a pejorative, it is also an unintended compliment — my work broke through the Left’s defenses and struck at the heart of their political project.

As I have reflected on the battles of the past year, I have discerned six principles for fighting against the ideologies of the Left, which might prove useful to other writers, activists, and political leaders:

1. Fight ideologies, not individuals. Much of the national political media is structured like a tabloid: reporters follow personalities, scandals, and horse-race politics. There is a place for this, to be sure, but more sophisticated writers and activists should seek a deeper understanding of the ideologies and power structures that shape the modern world. Luckily, the ideology of the woke is hiding in plain sight: they have left a 60-year paper trail of books, articles, and speeches. Conservatives must do the homework to understand the ideology, rather than simply continue tilting at the tabloids.

2. Don’t win the debate, win the fight. Many political writers and activists spend an immense amount of time “debating the issues,” imagining that politics functions like a college debating society. While debate is certainly stimulating, it is only one component of politics — and, arguably, a small one. To be effective, one should spend more time conceptualizing political goals and devising a straight-line strategy for achieving them. Sometimes, this will include debate, which elevates the issue through conflict and controversy; but, more often than not, one can win the fight with very little debate.

Christopher F. Rufo is a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute.

3. Tell stories to move people. In practical politics, narratives are superior to arguments. For example, one could argue that “critical race theory is a neo-Marxist ideology that divides the world into oppressor and oppressed.” Certainly, this would engage some readers. But imagine another approach: “In Cupertino, California, teachers forced 8-year-olds to deconstruct their racial and sexual identities, then rank themselves according to a hierarchy of oppression.” This formulation connects emotionally, which is the essential precondition for action.

4. Don’t complain about hypocrisy, change incentives. Hypocrisy in politics should surprise no one — and yet, conservatives often celebrate its exposure as a victory. In reality, hypocrisy reveals an existing power asymmetry: political and intellectual leaders who can engage in hypocrisy without consequence are in a position of greater power. The solution, therefore, is not to merely expose the hypocrisy, but to devise a strategy to undermine that deeper power and change the incentives. When the hypocrisy starts leading to consequences, you have succeeded.

5. Make bad actors pay a price. Good reporting exposes the powerful and demands action. For example, earlier this year, the boisterous social media activist Karlyn Borysenko exposed Coca-Cola’s diversity training program, which encouraged employees to “be less white.” This led to a round of intense negative media for Coca-Cola and, according to some reports, contributed to the resignation of the company’s chief counsel and decision to pause its “diversity” program. Borysenko not only stopped the program — she changed the incentives for the future.

6. Attack, attack, attack. Politics plays out over relatively long cycles, so it is essential to establish a narrative over time. One story about corruption in government will draw curiosity; but a series of stories over the course of a year will change how people understand the issue and, with some luck, inspire reform. The ambition of a reporting series or activist initiative should not be to establish a simple narrative, but to create the skeleton of a broader “meta-narrative” that can be fleshed out with each new story, which gives it life.

These six strategies are by no means exhaustive, but they sketch out some of the principles that have made my reporting on critical race theory successful. Some left-wing critics have complained that my reporting is “biased”; the *New York Times* calls me a “clever propagandist.” But I am not a hard news reporter; I am openly and unapologetically a politically engaged writer who uses the techniques of journalism, rhetoric, persuasion, and policy to inch the world towards my vision of the good society. If anything, I am significantly more honest — to myself and to the public — than my critics at outlets such as the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, who hide their political agenda behind a false veil of neutrality, objectivity, and “fact checking.”

Ultimately, success is the best evidence. Writers, activists, and political leaders who understand these principles and put them into action can laugh away their critics, who, consciously or not, live in a world outside reality. 🦋

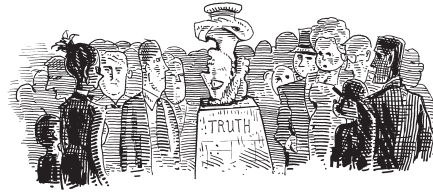


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The Teen Trans Craze

The truth is now out there.

by Abigail Shrier



In 2019, when I began writing *Irreversible Damage*, the transgender craze quietly ravaging teenage girls for nearly a decade burst into an uncontrolled, destructive burn. The previous year, a public health researcher then at Brown University, Dr. Lisa Littman, had stuck her neck out. In an academic paper, she hypothesized that the sudden spike in transgender identification among teen girls was the result not of typical gender dysphoria (severe discomfort in one's biological sex, normally beginning in early childhood) but of social contagion. Trans identification, Littman argued, had become the newest vector by which teenage girls experiencing some very real emotional difficulties talked themselves into illness and coaxed each other to self-harm. Analogous to eating disorders, transgender identification had become a maladaptive coping mechanism for untold thousands of anxious and depressed teen girls.

Within academic circles, Littman's study caused an uproar. Although it would eventually find corroboration in other academic papers, fierce opposition came from activists who can be counted on to blow their tops. Littman was fired from a job she loved. But apart from some reporting on the controversy, the media spent little effort investigating her theory. Families continued to suffer, having no idea that their daughters' sudden trans identification was likely part of a teen girl contagion racing across the Western world.

In 2019, no one knew how pervasive the phenomenon of teen trans-identification really was. And only the parents whose daughters had fallen into this well had any clue that schools, adolescent therapists, social media influencers, and even doctors were encouraging and facilitating social and medical transition among teen girls. Few knew how easily a teen girl could obtain irreversible hormone treatments and surgeries without a psychiatric diagnosis or her parents' permission. Covered by many university plans, the hormones were dirt cheap, the surgeries readily available, and the social push to undergo them: relentless.

But the epidemic was real: Between 2016 and 2017, the number of gender surgeries among biological females in the U.S. quadrupled.

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

In 2019 alone, double mastectomies for “gender dysphoria” rose 15 percent, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons. Right now, GoFundMe alone hosts tens of thousands of fundraisers for “top surgery” so that young women can afford to remove healthy breasts. By every account of physicians and plastic surgeons, the majority of those requesting these surgeries were adolescent girls.

With incessant lies, activists had succeeded in stirring a fog around the medical and therapeutic issues related to the trans teen trend. Activists had created new language, “gender-affirming care” and “gender-affirming surgery,” as if girls were being treated only with mild interventions that simply supported young women in who they really were. In fact, the treatments were grisly, risky, dangerous, and based on the flimsiest evidence of any mental health benefits. The shifting goals of the treatments and the lies on which they were based often made them seem more like witchcraft. Only the doctors pressing them on teens weren’t crackpots on the margins of society but graduates of our prestigious med schools. They advertised to youth on TikTok, they attacked other doctors on Twitter, they evinced the reckless bravado of gangsters.

To uncover their corruption, I needed to dispel a slew of myths: No, this wasn’t primarily happening to girls from troubled families. Neither divorce nor childhood trauma nor parent homophobia had created this epidemic. This was happening to liberal, two-parent families. It captivated the brightest daughters of highly educated parents — people of means who sprung for calculus tutors and tennis lessons. This was happening to girls — in other words — just like yours.

And I needed parents to know that so many of the experts who urged their daughters toward transition were, at best,

reckless. At worst, they were inebriated, drunk on a gender ideology until they could hardly recall that old Hippocratic Oath. Saints of Social Justice, conquistadors on behalf of a popular and celebrated cause, they had all but forgotten their patients. When I asked gender surgeons how they could justify removing the breasts of a girl who said she was “gender fluid” — i.e., someone whose gender pendulum was in mid-swing — they demurred as if I just wasn’t getting it.

But I was getting it, and soon, so were the parents.

**For the first time,
parents whose
daughter decides she
is “trans” are no longer
blindsided by the
epiphany.**

Six months after I published *Irreversible Damage* in June of 2020, the High Court of Justice in England heard the testimony of doctors I had interviewed in my book and declared that a young woman, Keira Bell, had been subject to a hasty, reckless medical transition she began at age 16 with grossly inadequate medical oversight. More than 50 bills have been proposed in state legislatures to curtail or end medical transition for minors.

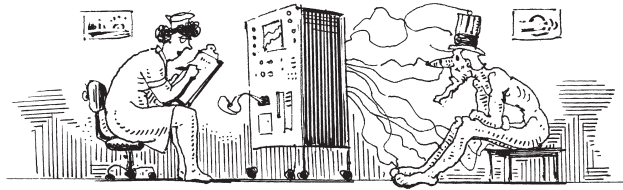
For the first time in a decade, an actual debate is occurring over the appropriateness and salubrity of gender treatments for minors. For the first time, parents whose daughter suddenly decides she is “trans” are no longer blindsided by the epiphany. Schools who encourage minors to adopt a new name and gender identity and actively conceal that identity from parents are now on notice that the days of such schoolwide conspiracies to deceive caring parents are numbered.

The attempts to censor my book have been legion. I fought every one — in the pages of the *Wall Street Journal*, in *Quillette*, on *Tucker Carlson Tonight*, and on Twitter. I continue to receive documents charting the ways Big Tech censors my work. Pity for them, the truth is already out there. 🐿

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From Conservatism to Revivalism

A declaration of American renewal in four simple statements.

by **Scott McKay**

What's wrong with conservatism in 2021? Nothing . . . and everything. Nothing is wrong with conservatism because, applied correctly, it works. The ideals of our nation's Founding Fathers work, and those are what conservatism seeks to conserve. No fault can be found in that.

But everything is wrong with conservatism because it hasn't been applied correctly. Conservatism, far too often, has been tangled with corporatism — and worse, conservatism is far too politically conservative. When you lack the vision to apply America's founding ideals to the problems of today and instead simply attempt to preserve a status quo, the imposition of which you fought against a mere decade ago, you are no more situated to successfully defeat the neocommunist Left than old-fashioned American liberalism has been.

We need something new. We need, essentially, conservatism on offense.

Most of 21st-century America is so divorced from the ideals of our founding, a reality few in this country demanded but is nonetheless the case through a combination of deception, incompetence, sloth, and corruption, that to conserve it would be a disservice to the movement which bears its name.

We don't need or want to conserve America. Not as it is. America as it is elected Joe Biden. And America as it is made Chuck Schumer and Nancy Pelosi the most important legislators in the country — and Gavin Newsom and Andrew Cuomo our most consequential state-level elected officials (before Cuomo was forced out of office).

Conserve that? No.

What we need is to revive America. We need to push back against the incompetence and treason which have encroached upon our liberty and prosperity, and we need a reflowering of the cultural, economic, and political patrimony our forebears gave us.

Ben Franklin said he gave us “a Republic, if you can keep it.” Conservatism took up the standard of keeping it, and then proceeded to surrender on the important topics.

Instead, let's build a new movement on the successes of conservatism while learning from and rejecting its failures.

Let's call it Revivalism, because we need to revive what's been lost amid the cultural, economic, and political aggressions of our enemies foreign and domestic.

I offer four main tenets on which to build the movement. They are:

First, civilization is meant to make it easier to earn a living than to steal one, which requires just enough government to accomplish that purpose and no more. As soon as



Scott McKay is publisher of the Hayride and founder of the Speakeasy app.

you introduce too much government, you have given the pillagers an easier road to plunder than they ever could have through violence.

And we have far, far too much government.

Our people know that we've lost our way. We know that the nonstop COVID fear porn and never-ending inflationary government giveaways are merely symptoms of the real disease; we are both oppressed by and dependent upon the State, and it has made us less as people.

Government, in the American model we seek to revive, is meant to be merely a tool to insure liberty and security from villains and enemies.

Second, our government is not and should never be seen as representative of the people. Rather, it is representative of the interests who have access to government. Some of those interests are popular, but

most are not. Therefore the State must be limited in its powers and the Revivalist project is to pursue every avenue possible to make it irrelevant, not to give it more influence over our lives.

This is hard stuff, of course, because what it requires is the building of communities through engagement and activism. It requires service to one's fellow man. It requires nurturing and championing the civil society — churches, men's clubs, labor unions, bowling leagues, pot-luck dinners, and the rest.

You've undoubtedly noticed the diminution of these things. The gay and trans lobbies have destroyed the joy in forming and growing them, and now our political elite demonizes them as "super-spreaders" of the virus. Instead, they want us on our phones living our lives on social media that they control.

Revivalists demand a return of community, and we demand that the government gets the hell out of our way.

Third, politics is downstream from culture, but politics has built a boat with a powerful motor. Further, politics corrodes everything it touches, and it has corroded our culture almost completely.

As culture is the foundation of society, it must be protected from those who would use it to tear us apart. Without winning that war, which conservatism sadly has never tried to do, all will eventually be lost.

Revivalism demands that the Right engage in defending American culture, which we all recognize when we see it. Specifically, we must elevate it beyond the touch of politics.

What does that mean? It means producing cultural content with a level of activity at least equal to that of the Left, it means reviving beauty in the arts, and it means breaking and replacing those cultural institutions which have so clearly failed us.

Schools. Universities. Hollywood. Corporate media. Professional sports, if it won't get the message.

Start locally and move up from there. Let's write novels and plays. Let's be funny again. Let's never be canceled. And let's show the world that freedom is a lot more fun than wokeness.

Finally, prosperity, or access to it, must be shared by all or it is illusory. The Revivalist

project seeks to reopen the American and global economies to competition by independents and startups and to fight back against oligopolistic corporations. It's a capitalist but anti-corporate philosophy.

We can defend low tax rates for billionaires on a philosophical basis all day long, but frankly it's a loser of an idea to defend Mark Zuckerberg or Jeff Bezos' income. Conservatives have done that, and what has it got them? The occasional think-tank donations with strings attached to push for open borders and cheap labor? Section 230 protection allowing social media companies to play censor without consequences? Open monopolistic abuses bought-up Republican politicians are busy defending? Lucrative consulting contracts for Frank Luntz from the Sacklers of killer-opioid fame?

Conservatives have let themselves be defined as defenders of America's worst actors. Our elites make the robber barons of old look like angels, and they're all Democrats now.

Revivalism offers a fresh start and a chance to stand with the American people against those elites who have foisted this dystopian 21st century upon us. Let's start over and demand better.

Let's be unafraid and let's fight to win.

Let's be revivalists. And let's revive America. 🇺🇸

We need a
reflowering of the
cultural, economic,
and political
patrimony our
forebears gave us.



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President Kamala?

Could Democrats invoke the 25th Amendment?

by George Parry

How much longer can Joe Biden remain in the White House? The man is feeble-minded, weak, and incompetent. In his first six months in office, he has compiled an astounding record of failure and disaster. Despite the best efforts of his handlers and the ever-compliant corporate media to hide the truth, his already limited mental acuity is rapidly deteriorating in plain sight. What are the chances that he will make it to the end of his first term?

In the wake of Biden’s idiotically planned and disastrous withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan, there have been growing calls for his impeachment. But, with the Democrats in control of the House of Representatives, the likelihood of that body passing articles of impeachment is nonexistent. Or, as Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell has flatly stated, “Look, there isn’t going to be any impeachment.”

In other words, the Republican calls for impeachment are going nowhere and serve primarily as a feel-good fund-raising narrative for the party.

In apparent recognition of the futility of pursuing impeachment, there has also been a great deal of speculation about using the 25th Amendment to “remove” Biden. But how would that work and what are the possible outcomes should it be invoked?

The 25th Amendment provides, in part, as follows:

Section 1 – In the case of the removal of the President from office or of his death or resignation, the Vice President shall become President.”

Section 2 – Whenever there is a vacancy in the office of the Vice President, the President shall nominate a Vice President who shall take office upon confirmation by a majority of both Houses of Congress.

In the 1970s, these provisions were used when Vice President Spiro Agnew resigned after being charged with tax evasion. President Nixon nominated House Minority Leader Gerald Ford to replace Agnew, and Congress approved the nomination.

One year later, when Nixon resigned during the Watergate scandal, Ford became president and nominated Nelson Rockefeller to be vice president. Following approval by Congress, Rockefeller was sworn in as vice president.

But that was then. What would happen in today’s bitterly divided political thunderdome if Biden was not removed from office? Could he, instead, either yield or have his powers taken away and still remain president?

The answers to those questions can be found in sections 3 and 4 of the 25th Amendment which deal with the physical or mental incapacitation of the president.



George Parry is a former federal and state prosecutor.

At least one commentator has opined that the Democrats will never use the 25th Amendment to “remove” Biden since that would result in Kamala Harris becoming president. If that happened, the Democrats would supposedly lose Vice President Harris’ tie-breaking vote in the Senate, and their legislative agenda would grind to a halt.

That’s a happy thought, but a careful reading of sections 3 and 4 of the amendment indicates that the outcome would be otherwise. In fact, certain elements of the Democrat Party might benefit greatly from using the 25th Amendment to sideline Biden.

Section 3 provides that, if Biden were to declare that “he is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office . . . such powers and duties shall be discharged by the Vice President as Acting President.” It does not provide that, upon such declaration, the president would cease to hold office and that the vice president would become president.

If, in lieu of resigning, Biden advised the Congress of his inability to discharge his duties, pursuant to Section 3, he would remain in office while Vice President Kamala Harris took over as acting president.

But what is an acting president? Could Kamala Harris be an acting president and remain vice president? If so, would Acting President Harris still preside over the Senate where she could still provide tie-breaking votes?

There is nothing in the amendment that defines the term “acting president” or provides that she would cease to be vice president with the power to preside over the Senate.

For many Democrats, such a transfer of power to Harris would likely be preferable to another three years of cleaning up after Biden.

But what would happen if Biden didn’t declare his inability to discharge his presidential duties and powers? Could Kamala Harris force a transfer of power?

The answers to those questions can be found in the amendment’s section 4 which provides that “[w]henver the Vice President and a majority of . . . the principal officers of the executive departments” declare to the Congress that “the President is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, the Vice President shall immediately assume the powers and duties of the office as Acting President.”

In the event the president should challenge this declaration, the issue would be resolved by a “two-thirds vote of both Houses that the President is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, the Vice President shall continue to exercise the same as Acting President.”

Failing such a two-thirds vote, the powers of office would revert to the president.

If against all odds Vice President Harris was somehow able to cobble together a majority of executive department heads to join in a declaration to Congress that Biden was “unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office” and through some miracle two-thirds of the House and Senate upheld that declaration, she would nevertheless become acting president only.

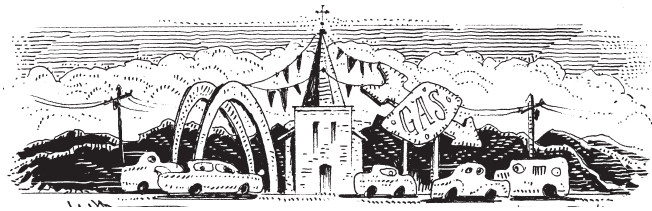
Biden would still be president, and Acting President Harris would remain as vice president with the power to cast tie-breaking votes in the Senate.

While all of this may induce wet dreams among those elements of the Democrat party eager to improve their electoral prospects by divesting Biden of power, the 25th Amendment provides no relief to those of us who fear for the future of our country.

In short, don’t take comfort in the mistaken belief that the 25th Amendment provides a way out of this nightmare.

Absent the outright removal of Joe Biden from office, our national journey into darkness and disaster has only just begun. ❀





Social Conservatives Have Something to Say on Every Issue

Today's Right ghettoizes social conservatives.

by Saurabh Sharma

Spend any time in the Washington policy community, or even in the policy-making centers of the 50 states, and you'll hear a common set of terms. Our ruling class will talk about "social issues," "economic issues," and, in the heart of the blob in D.C., "foreign policy."

These categories are specifically designed to disempower ordinary citizens and patriots on the American Right. Doing away with these categories is the first step to restoring a system that actually benefits the American people and their interests.

In 1992, Patrick J. Buchanan gave his famous "Culture War" speech at the Republican National Convention. Buchanan had come off a barn-burner campaign where he seriously challenged the eventual nominee and one-term president, George H.W. Bush.

"My friends, these people are our people," he said in his speech. "They don't read Adam Smith or Edmund Burke, but they come from the same schoolyards and the same playgrounds and towns as we come from. They share our beliefs and convictions,

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our hopes and our dreams. They are the conservatives of the heart." He was pleading with the country club faction of his party to realize that despite their barely concealed contempt for the already downwardly white working class, they had a responsibility to represent their interests, too.

The white working class' interests were cultural, yes. Their values were besieged by

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a managerial elite in our biggest cities who saw themselves as citizens of the world, not of particular places, and certainly not of a tribe with the conservative middle of their country. Buchanan's campaign centered on many of those cultural concerns, including gay marriage, abortion, and religious

freedom. However, Buchanan didn't stop there because the threats facing the people he was championing were also economic.

What happens when there is no safety net for families down on their luck? What happens when sons, fathers, and brothers die in foreign wars? All of the measures that social conservatives look to fare worse. Families suffer, addictions spike, children hunger, or are never born at all. Church attendance plummets.

Yet, today's Right ghettoizes social conservatives. We are allowed to speak on abortion and religious liberty. Occasionally, there will be a small flare-up about whether the child tax credit should be tweaked, but beyond that, social conservatives are consigned to "social issues." It's a very narrow category indeed.

There is another way. Social conservatives should have the confidence to demand more. Yes, social conservatives have something to say when our embassies fly pride flags in traditional nations like Poland. But we also have something to say when the children we so righteously defend in the womb are sent to die on their 18th birthday to ensure a women and gender studies program can grow unmolested at Kabul University.

Social conservatives have rightly attacked Confucius institutes — parasitic, indoctrinating university centers controlled by communist China. But we also have something to say about a system that allowed China to gain such influence in the first place. The tying together of the U.S. and Chinese economy will likely come apart in the coming years, but it could have been much less painful if the ordinary conservative patriot had their say when permanent normalization of trade relations was first on the table. Instead, the people responsible for “economic issues” and “foreign policy” ruled the roost.

There are no limits to the public policy domains where the ordinary conservative patriot has something to contribute, or even demand, in our policy discourse. Our foreign

adventures, legal immigration numbers, tax policy, posture towards our largest multinational corporations, and more could all be fair game for every social conservative in this country.

The very same mother of four who speaks up when cultural radicals take over her school should also get a say on the number of legal immigrants we admit. After all, it is her sons who will have to compete for jobs against the endless spigot of mass immigration. Even further still, she deserves a say on how we tax the multinational corporations that underwrite the social poison infecting her children’s school.

Instead, we say that mother is only allowed to speak on the narrow set of cultural issues that the corporate leadership of the Republican Party can minimally fulfill to prevent open revolt from the base.

Meanwhile, people with no conservative values at all, other than a bloodthirst for endless war and GDP growth, control our levers of public policy.

Every poll taken in the last 50 years shows that the “economically conservative” and “socially liberal or moderate” policymaker who doesn’t really care about “social issues” represents a vanishingly tiny portion of the electorate. The American Right shouldn’t give those people the reins to control every substantive domain of public policy.

These policymakers want social conservatives to focus on “social issues” because they know that if social conservatives were allowed to pay attention to the rest, they would arrive at very different answers, answers uncomfortable to the oligarchs who dominate American life. ❧





The Left Relegates Black Americans to Another Generation of Disadvantage

I would offer this secret to success to Black America: adversity builds greatness.

by **Dov Fischer**

I have standing to speak as a Jewish leader and even as an American opinion-maker. I do not have the hubris to push aside charlatans like Al Sharpton and Tamika Mallory and to speak for Black America. I regret that latter lack of standing because I am watching the Left destroy yet another Black American generation, and I cannot do a damn thing about it.

Jews historically have done well because we historically never got breaks. We had to figure it all out. No one paid my grandparents welfare to come to America. No one greeted my Bubbies (grandmothers) and Zaydies (grandfathers) with “entitlements” when they arrived at Ellis Island during the great East European migration of 1881-1914 that saw three million Jews come to America from Russia, Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania, Hungary, and elsewhere under the Tsar’s rubric.

Entitlements? Are you crazy? They were “entitled” to *nothing*. They were lucky to be allowed in. If they had been found with tuberculosis at the holding pens in Ellis Island, they would have been sent back to Alexander III and Nicholas II.

They had to pay their way from day one — or out they would go, back to Eastern Europe. No one was allowed here who would be a “public charge.” If they did not have a source of income, they needed to have a family member or someone sign a personal guarantee that

the sponsoring family would cover every cost. America was letting them in; that was more than kind. America certainly was not about to pay for them, too. Yes, America gave them access to a free education, but America had to make that *investment* — for America’s own self-interest. If we spend on educating immigrants, sooner or later they will become productive and pay taxes. By contrast, if we opt to “save money” by leaving them illiterate, they will end up robbing banks, holding up stores, rearing new generations of miscreants, and costing tax dollars rather than paying into the public bourse.

But other than a basic education — nada, zilch, *gornisht*. And that education came on *America’s* terms, not theirs. We tell you what subjects you will learn. We tell you what is math and what is reading and what is spelling. We tell you the history we want you to know. And don’t you dare come to us for “bilingual education.” We teach in *English* — our way or the highway. Math really is only numerical symbols and calculating, so theoretically an argument could be made to teach that subject in a native language — German, Italian, Polish, Yiddish. *But ya know what? We don’t feel like it.* So we’re gonna teach it in English. Either you learn — in *English* — that 16 times 4 equals 64, or you end up a bum. Welcome to America.

That’s how Jews got to be successful in America. And Italians and Germans and Poles and Chinese and Japanese



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and whatever else ya got. They faced discrimination, closed doors, and workplace prejudice. Judges ruled against them unfairly in the courts. Hotels kept them out, even cheesy motels. *Country clubs? Fuggediboudit.* Sophisticated telephone systems did not yet exist, but — if they did — no utility company would have built in an option: “For Italian, press 2. For Chinese, press 3. For Polish, press 4. For German, press 5. For Yiddish, press 6.” You woulda got one choice — *namely no choice.* And, sonovogun, everyone managed to learn how to pay their utilities bills, that 16 times 4 equals 64, and everyone either supported themselves or had a guarantor who did.

If only I could be a leader of Blacks in America, I would offer that secret to success. Affirmative action? You want special preference to get into colleges with lower SAT scores than White people? Well, they never offered that to Jews here. In fact, they did *just the opposite:* the entire Ivy League infrastructure maintained explicit quotas to keep Jews out. So you know what Jews did? We worked even harder — just to get an “even break.” Most Jews won’t tell you that, but that’s how we all were reared: “If you think ‘they’ are going to give you an even chance, you are crazy. You only will get in if you are better.”

There is a reason that many people stereotypically want a *Jewish* doctor, a *Jewish* lawyer, a *Chinese* doctor. So what’s behind that? It should be obvious: We are not born with a “doctor gene.” That is why I became a rabbi, an attorney, a law professor, a political pundit — but not a doctor. It’s not in my genes. But — at least until 20 years ago — you knew if you got a doctor who is a Jew or Chinese that he or she had to be damned good because “they” never otherwise would have let that person into medical or law school or through it to graduation.

Adversity builds greatness.

We have been giving Blacks affirmative action for half a century. *The Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* case was decided in 1978. It was argued in 1977 after Allan P. Bakke twice had been rejected by the University of California at Davis medical school. For 50 years, our society has been giving Blacks the advantage in college and graduate school admissions to “make up” for slavery and the evils we perpetrated against Blacks for centuries. We barred them from everything, even baseball. How can we not be ashamed that it took until 1947, only after Hitler had made everyone ashamed of racialism and after Blacks had fought every bit as bravely as Whites in Japan and in

Europe, that Branch Rickey had the courage to do the right thing?

But the question fairly must be asked: how is it possible that, after 50 years — two, even three generations — of affirmative action, the highest crime rates and the highest percentage of young men without fathers at home persist in the Black community — all leading to the highest crime *victim* rates because, after all, street thugs and gang bangers do not take limousines to Malibu, the Hamptons, and Chicago’s Gold Coast District. They attack near their homes. What has held Blacks back *today*? How can anyone be talking about *even more* “reparations” now — that I, whose forebears were not even here until the 1900s, should be paying reparations to LeBron James and Obama?

The answer is stark. It is not “systemic racism” because the “system” is not a tinge racist. It is not unfair laws. It is not a police force that needs to be defunded. It is not global warming. It is not a lack of government assistance. It is not an absence of Medicare for All. Rather, *the Left which destroyed Black America continues destroying Black America, and now has set in place an entire leftist infrastructure to assure yet another destroyed Black generation.*

Leftist educators want to help by offering “woke math.” All addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division answers will be right. Yes, but the kids who grow up with that woke “education” not only will be rejected for accounting jobs at Ernst & Young, KPMG, and Deloitte — they won’t even be able to get hired at H&R Block. Leftist educators want to mark them correct when they speak with neighborhood grammar constructs and syntax that trample proper English. But when those kids someday show up at job interviews and speak an imperfect English, they will not get hired. Even leftist law firms need their court filings to be comprehensible and persuasive.

President Lyndon Johnson and the 1960s liberal Democrats thought they were helping Blacks with the “Great Society” programs of welfare and handouts. Instead, they destroyed the Black family. Since the government gave more money if household income was lower, men left the household, stopped working, or stopped struggling to attain pay raises. Boys grew up without on-site fathers whose very lives would demonstrate that a man must wake up in the morning, get groomed and dressed, go to work, work a long day, come home tired, go to sleep at a sensible hour, and do it all over again the next day — pretty much forever. That may not seem as romantic as joining

a local gang, but an on-site father can tell his son about the friendships at work, the funny stories, the products he helps bring to market — and can model quiet heroism. Instead, a fatherless home is led by a mother who, no matter her heroic efforts to rear the boy right, *is not a man. She is a woman.* For all of Leftist non-binary orthodoxy, a woman cannot role-model for a *boy*.

I wish I could push that charlatan Sharpton aside and share my message for Black America. It would be: I wish for all of you exactly, precisely, what I got: *nothing* — except for a working dad who lived at home, watched some TV with me on the weekend, taught me to observe the Sabbath and to love G-d, and instructed me on life values until leukemia took him at his age 45, my 14. I wish for you schooling that shows no respect for your neighborhood grammar or your math challenges. I wish for you a cultural environment where it is unseemly to blame others for your poor results — even when it really is their *fault*, not yours — where the police are *always right* even though they include bad apples, where the school principal *always is revered* by your parents instead of being targeted for lawsuits, where you get into college or graduate school only if you make the grades and not by having the standardized tests suspended to slide you in.

I can’t do it. If I tell you the truth, Sharpton will call me an epithet. You will, too. And all the White liberals — who never ever would let their *own* kids dare accept any of the “entitlements” they offer you — also will call me an epithet. But they never would let their *own* kid accept a welfare check because they know that the road to Hell is paved with good intentions. ☞



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Pornhub, OnlyFans, and How Financial Institutions Are Aiming to Curb Sex Trafficking Online

Banks and credit card companies are on high alert.

by Laila Mickelwait

Financial institutions have an essential role in preventing online sex trafficking, including the monetization of filmed underage sexual abuse, which is rampant on mainstream websites. Last year, Pornhub, the world's most popular porn site with 47 billion visits per year and enough content that it would take 169 years to watch the videos uploaded in a single year, was globally exposed and condemned for enabling and profiting from mass sexual crime, including child rape and abuse, sex trafficking, and a spectrum of illegal image-based sexual abuse.

In December of 2020, an explosive *New York Times* investigation revealed Pornhub as a site “infested” with the filmed criminal sexual abuse of victims. The spotlight for enabling this mega-sex trafficking operation was placed on the credit card companies whose services allow exploitation to remain profitable. Within days of the damning exposé, Mastercard confirmed the presence of illegal content on the site, including child pornography, and was

the first to cut ties with Pornhub. Visa and Discover quickly followed suit. PayPal had already stopped doing business with the site in late 2019 after a *Sunday Times* investigation revealed dozens of illegal videos found on the site within minutes, some featuring children as young as 3 years old.

These moves by credit card companies to disengage with Pornhub and its parent company MindGeek were not done solely out of benevolence, but also self-protection. According to the U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Act, a company that knowingly benefits from a sex trafficking venture is liable to be sued. In the case of Visa, removing its services from Pornhub in 2020 was too little, too late. The company was aware of sex trafficking and child exploitation on the site long before the *New York Times* exposé, yet chose to continue doing business with the company anyway. Because of this, Visa was named as a defendant in a massive landmark case filed by attorneys Michael Bove and Lauren Tabaksblat of the New York firm Brown Rudnick against Pornhub on behalf of 34 women, 14 of whom were children when they were exploited for profit on the site.

Big Porn sites like Pornhub have been operating for far too long with little scrutiny or oversight, enabling them to get away with distributing user-generated filmed sex acts on a massive scale without even the simplest of measures in place to prevent criminal abuse. Until December of 2020, all it took to upload to Pornhub was an email address. Anonymously, in minutes, anyone around the world could upload content to the site with no verification to ensure the individual in the video was not a child or a rape victim. This is clearly an unacceptable practice for a company that profits from distributing and monetizing filmed sex acts. But Pornhub is not alone. Most user-generated pornography sites operate in the same reckless and negligent manner.

The situation with Pornhub has put banks and credit card companies on high alert. Financial services actors are realizing the serious liability risk they face in continuing to do business with websites that have been exposed for generating profits from criminal sex acts that amount to trafficking. They are now taking measures to implement policies and regulations to prevent further abuse and mitigate their own liability — as they should.

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In response to becoming aware of the great risks associated with doing business with Big Porn sites that do not verify the age or consent of those in the millions of videos they profit from, Mastercard recently implemented a new protective global policy that disallows the use of their card on all user-generated pornography websites unless a site engages in rigorous moderation of videos and images before upload along with age and unambiguous consent verification for every person shown. These are, of course, common-sense preventative measures that all pornography websites should have implemented from the moment they went live. These new policies are set to take effect October 15.

OnlyFans, a user-generated content subscription site earning \$2 billion per year with millions of users, is one of the world's most well-known pornography distributors. The company shocked the public when it suddenly announced it would be dropping all pornographic content on October 1 before quickly reversing course following backlash for the decision. With the pending deadline of October 15 to implement Mastercard's required safety measures, anyone can see the timing is no coincidence.

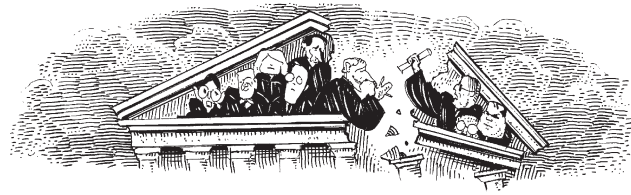
One has to assume that OnlyFans decided it was too costly to comply with the new safety measures implemented by the

financial institutions it relies on for income. It is telling that the first reaction of the executives making millions off the site was to rid the entire site of pornography rather than implement stringent protective measures required by the credit card companies and banks.

Perhaps the issues these executives needed to resolve ran deeper than they believed could be remedied in the specified time frame. You see, OnlyFans was recently exposed by the BBC in multiple published investigations that revealed underage exploitation on the site, illegal content, and bad faith moderation practices. In recent weeks, over 100 members of Congress from both the Democratic and Republican parties called on the Department of Justice to investigate the site and sources say there is currently an FBI investigation underway.

With OnlyFans' decision to continue to distribute and monetize pornographic content, we will now have to see if and how it cleans up its act to comply with the banks and card companies' new safety regulations, and whether it comes out of this debacle unscathed. We also have yet to see whether they end up facing civil and criminal accountability from victims who have already been harmed. The future of OnlyFans is still to be determined. ❌

Big Porn sites have been operating for far too long with little scrutiny or oversight, enabling them to get away with distributing user-generated filmed sex acts on a massive scale.



It Is *Casey*, Not *Roe*, on Trial Before the Supreme Court

Science trumps stare decisis.

by Margot Cleveland

When the Supreme Court’s 2021 term begins in October, the docket will include the high-profile abortion case *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*. While the abortion-on-demand press and public view *Dobbs* as a threat to *Roe v. Wade*, *Roe* has long been dead, and the question the high court must decide will be whether *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*’s misplaced homage to stare decisis can survive.

In 2018, Mississippi’s legislature enacted the Gestational Age Act, which, with limited exceptions, banned abortion after 15 weeks’ gestation. The same day Mississippi Gov. Phil Bryant signed the act into law, the state’s only licensed abortion clinic, Jackson Women’s Health Organization, and one of its abortion doctors filed suit in federal court to challenge the constitutionality of the law.

A federal district court promptly entered a temporary restraining order precluding enforcement of the law and later entered judgment in favor of Jackson Women’s Health, declaring the law unconstitutional. The state appealed to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals which upheld the lower court

decision based on controlling Supreme Court precedent holding “viability marks the earliest point at which the State’s interest in fetal life is constitutionally adequate to justify a legislative ban on nontherapeutic abortions.”

Mississippi petitioned for review by the United States Supreme Court and in May, the justices agreed to hear the case to decide one question: “Whether all pre-viability prohibitions on elective abortions are unconstitutional.”

The Supreme Court first divined a constitutional right to abortion emanating from the purported penumbras of privacy in *Roe v. Wade* in 1973. *Roe* then crafted a trimester approach to govern the regulation of abortion, which the high court, nearly twenty years later in *Casey v. Planned Parenthood*, branded as a “rigid” framework under which “almost no regulation at all is permitted during the first trimester of pregnancy; regulations designed to protect the woman’s health, but not to further the State’s interest in potential life, are permitted during the second trimester; and during the third trimester, when the fetus is viable, prohibitions are permitted provided the life or health of the mother is not at stake.”

The plurality opinion in *Casey*, with authorship attributed jointly to Justices

David Souter, Sandra Day O’Connor, and Anthony Kennedy, retained what it declared the “essential” holding of *Roe* — the concept of a constitutional right to abortion. But constitutional piety alone could not support the justices’ decision in *Casey*. The Court relied on the prudential principle of stare decisis and asserted the safeguarding of judicial integrity to prop up the decision.

But it was a strange stare decisis embraced by the lead opinion in *Casey*, for while that Latin phrase means “to abide by, or adhere to, decided cases,” the trio of justices no more adhered to *Roe* than they did the authentic principles of stare decisis.

In *Roe*, the majority had spied an unwritten right to privacy hidden in the contours of the Constitution. But the lead opinion in *Casey* refused to repeat the fiction, finding refuge instead in the justices’ “reasoned judgment” of the meaning of “liberty.” *Casey* likewise abandoned the trimester approach to abortion jurisprudence and replaced the strict scrutiny standard of *Roe* with the command that pre-viability, states not impose an “undue burden” on women seeking abortions.

While forsaking these many aspects of *Roe*, *Casey* declared that when coupled

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A Life of Its Own, Jan. 17, 2020 (Bill Wilson Studio)

with its view of liberty, *stare decisis* and institutional integrity compelled the Court to conclude that “a woman’s right to terminate her pregnancy before viability is the most central principle of *Roe v. Wade*,” and that it was a “rule of law and a component of liberty” the justices could not renounce.

The reality that *Casey* fortified its holding on the basis of institutional integrity and *stare decisis* provides the newly comprised Supreme Court the framework for holding that states may regulate, and even ban, abortions pre-viability.

In holding that the force of *stare decisis* commanded the Court to uphold the “central principle” of *Roe*, that a woman has the right to terminate her pregnancy before viability, the *Casey* plurality stressed that the “factual underpinning” of *Roe* has remained unchanged. The briefing to the Supreme Court in *Dobbs*, however, establishes that nothing could be further from the truth.

The “factual underpinning” of *Roe* rested on the Court’s belief that what weighed against a woman’s interest in terminating her pregnancy was the state’s “important and legitimate interest in protecting the potentiality of human life.” While *Casey* claimed to acknowledge medical advances, pushing the gestational age of viability down from 28 weeks at the time of *Roe* to 23 to 24 weeks, the majority ignored the fundamental factual mistake on which *Roe* rested: that the

state’s interest is only in “the potentiality of human life.”

However, the flurry of *amici curiae*, or friends of the court, briefs filed in *Dobbs* will no longer allow the justices to hide behind that fiction. Those briefs establish, as a matter of science, that the state’s interest is not merely in the potentiality of human life — a premise needed for viability to hold any relevance.

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For instance, in one brief, submitted by three female physicians, Dr. Grazie Pozo Christie, a diagnostic radiologist, Dr. Colleen Malloy, a neonatologist, and Dr. Monique Chireau Wubbenhorst, an obstetrician, the doctors detail the scientific and technical developments since *Roe* and *Casey*.

Viability has moved a full one and a half months earlier than when *Roe* wrote of “potential” human life, and now reaches down to 21 weeks of gestation, the physicians

write. Likewise, these *amici curiae* stress that scientific evidence from the last decade shows that as early as 12 weeks’ gestation, the human being, in utero, experiences “immediate and unreflective pain.”

The most compelling argument, though, comes with visual support. The physicians detail scientific advances in diagnostic capabilities and interventional surgical procedures that allow doctors to treat their youngest patients, in utero, at as early as 15 weeks’ gestation. “During these surgeries, physicians will open the uterus and operate directly on the fetus, producing images like the one below, which reinforce the human form of the child in the womb,” the brief reads.

“The human form of the child, regardless of its viability, is unaccounted for by *Casey*,” the *amici curiae* brief stresses. And technological advances now destroy the argument that a fetus is merely a “clump of cells.” A juxtaposition of two 15-week fetuses, one from a primitive sonogram from the *Roe* era and the other a modern 3D image, crystallizes this reality in the brief.

The reliance on *stare decisis* in *Casey* provides the conservative majority a template for rejecting viability as the controlling question when the Court hears the *Dobbs* case this coming term. And in *Dobbs*, five justices need only find that science trumps *stare decisis*, and that the high court’s institutional integrity cannot survive a continuing denial of the humanity of the unborn. ❄️



The Supreme Court May Rule on Affirmative Action — But What Happens Afterwards?

There's good reason to think the Court will make it illegal altogether.

by Ellie Gardey

Affirmative action as practiced by universities today is characterized by total lawlessness. It is in blatant violation of the bounds ruled permissible in *Grutter v. Bollinger* in 2003. While the Court said that affirmative action must be narrowly tailored, colleges today use race as a predominant factor that determines whether or not a student will gain admission.

There is also evidence to suggest that elite universities in the nine states where affirmative action is illegal use race as an admissions factor. Would another Supreme Court decision make colleges suddenly start complying with the law? Doubtful.

The Supreme Court may soon consider affirmative action for the seventh time with the case *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard*. If the Court agrees to hear the case, it is possible that it will rule that affirmative action violates the Constitution. Either that, or the Court will rule that Harvard's affirmative action practices are illegal.

But whatever the Court's decision, one can be certain that college admissions departments will continue practicing far-reaching affirmative action. The administrators at these schools and their admissions departments are too racist against Asian students and obsessed with the racial demographics of their student body to do anything else.

To be sure, there will be some changes to how universities use race if the Supreme Court does rule against Harvard. Colleges will be forced to adjust their admission policies and practices in some ways to avoid getting sued. Thus, the average ACT scores of Asian, white, black, and Hispanic students at elite universities would likely move closer to each other, which would be a change from the current standard of requiring totally disparate academic standards for each race.

But bias against Asian students is so deeply ingrained within college admissions departments and officials are so racially biased — read: racist — against Asian students that they will continue to deploy “holistic” admissions practices

that systematically discriminate against Asians. These colleges couldn't stomach a student body made up of 50 percent Asian students. Harvard and Yale will avoid it at all costs.

Take, for instance, what Rod Bugarin, a former admissions officer at Wesleyan, Brown, and Columbia Universities, said: “The bar is different for every group. Anyone who works in the industry knows that.” He added that without affirmative action “our elite campuses will look like UCLA and Berkeley,” and “[t]hat wouldn't be good for Asians or for anyone else.”

Another former admissions officer at Vanderbilt who was quoted anonymously in the Students for Fair Admissions brief said: “Asians are very good students, but they don't provide the kind of intellectual environment that Jewish students provide.”

So while colleges would make some changes to their admissions practices, the same admissions officers who are ideologically devoted to giving priority to a student's race aren't going to throw that out the window.

Ellie Gardey is reporter and assistant editor at The American Spectator.

Harvard's Illegal, Racist Discrimination
In *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard*, a group of Asian American students accuse Harvard University of discriminating against them by accepting students of other races who had equivalent grades, test scores, and extracurricular activities at vastly greater rates.

They cite surveys the *Harvard Crimson* gave to incoming freshmen in recent years which had a nearly 80 percent response rate. According to the surveys, the average SAT in 2017 for East Asian and Indian respondents was 2299. For African Americans, it was 2107. This is a 192 point difference.

If Harvard selected students primarily based on their achievements and talents, you would expect that the racial makeup of its classes would vary over the years and that there would be similar standardized test scores across races. But that's not what happens. Year after year, Harvard's incoming freshmen classes *mysteriously* have a racial makeup within narrow percentages of each other.

In addition, Harvard's admissions officers systematically give Asian American students lower personality scores than students of other races. To add insult to injury, the Harvard admissions officials often justified these lower scores on the basis of Asian stereotypes, like saying that the student was quiet or studious.

One Harvard official summed up an Asian student's application this way in internal documents: "scores and application seem so typical of other Asian applications I've read: extraordinarily gifted in math with the opposite extreme in English."

Another Harvard admissions official described an Asian applicant as: "He's quiet and, of course, wants to be a doctor."

The Harvard case is similar to the Trump Department of Justice's lawsuit against Yale University (which the Biden administration dropped). In that case, the DOJ performed in-depth statistical analysis on the differentials in admissions standards across races at Yale. The evidence was damning.

Of Asian applicants to Yale whose high school academic achievements — grades, class rank, and standardized tests — put them in the top decile of Yale applicants, 14 percent were accepted in 2017 and

2018. For black applicants who fell within this same objectively measurable academic ranking, 60 percent were accepted.

Essentially, a Yale applicant's race was entirely determinative as to whether or not their SAT or ACT score was good enough. *Harvard Is Not Alone in Its Lawless Racism*

Disregard for the law is widespread in college admissions departments in the United States. Colleges regularly ignore both the Supreme Court's rulings and state laws on affirmative action.

Take the University of Michigan Law School, which was at the center of *Grutter v. Bollinger*. Though the Supreme Court upheld the law school's affirmative action practices in 2003, the people of Michigan passed a referendum in 2006 to make affirmative action illegal.

But today, there are still huge differentials in LSAT scores between what law schools term "underrepresented minorities" — black students, Hispanic students, and Native American students — and white and Asian students.

At the University of Michigan Law School, the average white or Asian student who was accepted had an LSAT score three points higher than the average black, Hispanic, Native American, or other "underrepresented minority."

This is according to Lawschooldata.org, a site where law school applicants self-report their admissions statistics and admissions decisions. While the Lawschooldata.org data is not verified and does not contain the data of all students who matriculated at the University of Michigan, tens of thousands of law school applicants use it as a sort of social media network to connect with one another through the arduous law school admissions process.

An LSAT score plays a huge role in the law school admissions process. And rightly so. Multiple studies show that an LSAT score is the most accurate predictor of a student's success in law school.

But this acceptance data would suggest that there are totally different admissions standards for Asian and white students than for black or Hispanic students at the University of Michigan. Under Michigan law, that is illegal.

The University of Michigan is not the only university discriminating by race in a state where it is illegal. The University of California—Berkeley School of Law,

which is ranked the ninth best law school in the United States by *U.S. News and World Report* and is in a state where affirmative action is illegal, has an LSAT differential between "underrepresented minorities" (read: preferred races) and white and Asian students of 2.7 points for the class matriculating in 2021.

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Part of the problem is that university admissions practices are notoriously shaded in secrecy. It is difficult to prove that admissions officers gave an advantage to black or Hispanic students because each individual admissions decision is complex and subjective. People are more than their scores and grades, so their personal factors can easily be used by an admissions officer as an excuse to make a decision actually based on a student's race without it being clear. But when the numbers are aggregated, it becomes obvious that university administrators are systematically biased against Asian students.

The late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg made this observation about the opaqueness of the college admissions process. In her dissenting opinion in *Gratz v. Bollinger*, the 2003 case considering the University of Michigan's undergraduate admissions policy of giving black and Hispanic students an automatic 20-point bonus towards their admissions score, Ginsburg wrote: "If honesty is the best policy, surely Michigan's accurately described, fully disclosed college affirmative action program is preferable to achieving similar numbers through winks, nods, and disguises."

And while there are a myriad of stories from the mainstream media about how black undergraduate enrollment fell at the University of Michigan immediately following the state ban on affirmative action in 2006, the number of racial minorities at the university has been substantially increasing

for many years. In 2013, 18.9 percent of the University of Michigan's undergraduates were racial minorities. By 2020, that number had increased to 37.9 percent.

The University of Michigan says it has been able to achieve this change by new recruitment policies and creating a university environment that is more amenable to racial minorities. For instance, the university has one of the largest diversity, equity, and inclusion departments in the nation, which has over 75 full-time employees.

"It's a courtship," the University of Michigan's enrollment manager Kedra Ishop told the *New York Times* in explaining how she was able to increase black enrollment.

The university maintains that it is a "cautionary tale" about what happens when affirmative action is made illegal.

Could the Supreme Court Rule Against Affirmative Action?

There's good reason to think that the Supreme Court will make affirmative action illegal altogether. Chief Justice John Roberts has consistently upheld that any amount

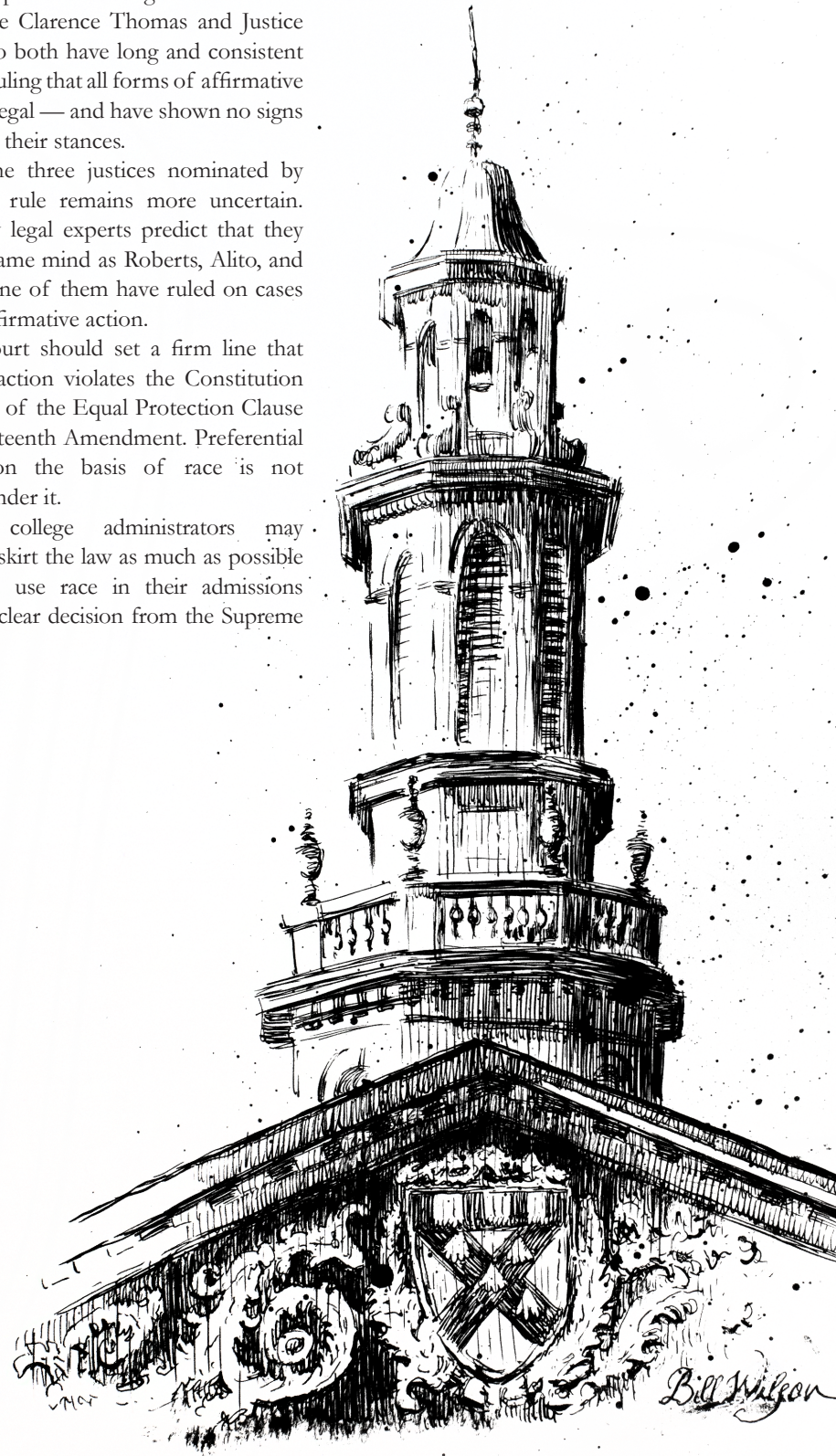
of affirmative action is in violation of the Constitution. In his first major decision as chief justice in 2007, Roberts wrote, "The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race." Justice Clarence Thomas and Justice Samuel Alito both have long and consistent records of ruling that all forms of affirmative action are illegal — and have shown no signs of changing their stances.

How the three justices nominated by Trump will rule remains more uncertain. While many legal experts predict that they are of the same mind as Roberts, Alito, and Thomas, none of them have ruled on cases involving affirmative action.

The Court should set a firm line that affirmative action violates the Constitution on the basis of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Preferential treatment on the basis of race is not permitted under it.

While college administrators may continue to skirt the law as much as possible in order to use race in their admissions decisions, a clear decision from the Supreme

Court is the only way to get closer to holding them accountable for their racism and to send a clear signal that discrimination on the basis of race is unconstitutional. ❧



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The Church Caves in the Age of COVID

Where is the Church's defense of religious conscience?

by George Neumayr

The Catholic Church has a long and distinguished history of opposing tyranny. But today's hierarchy has shown little interest in upholding that tradition in the age of COVID. From the very beginning of COVID's outbreak, the hierarchy signaled submission to the collectivists and central planners. The bishops immediately closed their churches and kept them closed for a long period of time, even as abortion clinics, tattoo parlors, liquor stores, and the like remained open.

In defiance of the First Amendment, many states defined religious activity as "non-essential" and most of the bishops accepted that definition, as if the Catholic Mass is no more essential than a pop music concert. In some states, nail salons opened before Catholic churches did.

It is hard to imagine the pre-Vatican II Church showing such craven deference to an increasingly godless state and its arbitrary definitions of what is and what is not essential. The traditional Catholic impulse during a crisis is not to eliminate public worship of God but to increase it. Religion is as essential to the soul as food is to the body. The churches should have been as open as supermarkets. But few bishops dared to make such points. Many of the bishops backed up governors as they turned into little dictators during the crisis.

As he rolled out his unconstitutional coronavirus executive orders, New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy bragged about his support from the New Jersey bishops. Murphy infamously said to Fox News host Tucker Carlson that he couldn't be bothered to think about the Bill of Rights — it was above his "pay grade" — but that he had consulted with religious leaders before issuing his edicts, as if to say to the rank-and-file religious: if your leaders don't mind these decrees, why should you? "We have to find a different way to worship," Murphy said.

The partnership of Pope Francis with the global Left grew even tighter after COVID emerged. Pope Francis eagerly seconded calls for a "Great Reset" in the name of COVID.

"We cannot return to the false securities of the political and economic systems we had before the crisis," Pope Francis wrote. "We need economies that give to all access to the fruits of creation, to the basic needs of life: to land, lodging and labor." Pope Francis was so excited about the prospect of an emboldened leftism in the wake of COVID that he tweeted out Joe Biden's slogan: "build back better." Never mind that Biden's conception of building back better includes abortion, assaults on the traditional family, and the promotion of transgenderism.



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A family prays at the first public Mass held at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York, New York, since large gatherings were halted due to the pandemic. (Ler Radin/Shutterstock)

The popes of the past would have recoiled from a project as dubious as the “Great Reset,” since it so obviously means reposing more and more trust in the moral judgments of overweening central planners who have an antipathy for Catholic teaching. Pope John Paul II warned about a “culture of death” and Pope Benedict XVI deplored the “dictatorship of relativism.” The “Great Reset” combines the worst of those two currents.

In May, the Vatican, telegraphing its support for the “Great Reset,” held a conference on COVID-related issues and invited Dr. Anthony Fauci to speak at it. Fauci gushed about the pope as a useful propagandist for the tyranny then unfolding in the name of public health. The pope was doing his work for him, Fauci said: “You have someone who’s a deeply religious person who will listen to their clergy. That’s different than me with a suit going into an area telling people to do something.”

A number of pro-abortion liberals, including Chelsea Clinton, spoke at the conference. Under previous pontificates, that would have been considered a grave scandal. But Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, the president of the Pontifical Council for Culture, who hosted the event, shrugged off such concerns and justified the conference on the absurd grounds that “More lenses are needed to bring into focus a complete picture of being and existence.”

The interest of Fauci, Clinton, and company in any Catholic exposition of “being and existence” is nil. How can the Church take her cue on “health” from those who consider the killing of unborn children an essential part of “health care”? Future historians will find it baffling that the Church joined the “Great Reset” juggernaut at the very moment the ruling class was committing itself ever more deeply to a secularized and anti-Catholic culture.

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As vaccine mandates proliferate, where is the Church’s defense of religious conscience? It is hard to find. The pope and many of the bishops are pressuring Catholics into bowing to those mandates. Indeed, Catholic institutions are applying those mandates with even more strictness than secular ones do. At the Vatican, there is a “no jab, no job” policy, reports Reuters.

“I believe that morally everyone must take the vaccine,” Pope Francis has said. But this goes against the guidance of his own Congregation for Doctrine of the Faith, which has said that “practical reason makes evident that vaccination is not, as a rule, a moral obligation and that, therefore, it must be voluntary.”

Ironically, the bishops most doctrinaire about compulsory vaccination are the ones who normally favor the loose application of rules. They have finally found a matter on which they can be strict. They have forbidden their priests to grant conscientious exemptions. It is the more conservative bishops who have questioned this collectivist stampede against conscience rights. As the Colorado bishops noted, dissenting from many of their colleagues, “Throughout history, human rights violations and a loss of respect for each person’s God-given dignity often begin with government mandates that fail to respect the freedom of conscience.”

“Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s,” Jesus Christ said. During the COVID crisis, alas, many in the Church have rendered unto Caesar what is not his due. To grant the government total control over a people’s health care decisions is to grant it total control over that people’s moral and religious lives. The Church exists not to serve such overreaching government, but to provide a refuge from it. ✠



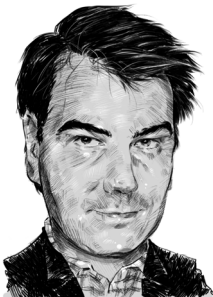
A Flight Into Death: Sigmund Freud, Byung-Chul Han, and the Decadence of Late Liberalism

Much of the world around us is defined by an impetuous cascade towards nothingness.

by Matthew Omolesky

Sophie Halberstadt was 26 years old and pregnant with her third child when she fell ill with the Spanish influenza. The tell-tale symptoms appeared on January 20, 1920, and worsened steadily over the next five days, just as the rain and sleet beat steadily against the leaded window panes of the Halberstadt family home in Hamburg. First came a wracking fever, accompanied by headaches, dizziness, and a painfully sore throat, followed by the onset of heliotrope cyanosis, which rendered Sophie's pale face a sickly shade of bluish-purple. Her pulse raced, then weakened and slowed. She struggled for air, and her throat rattled. Her mucosal membranes turned hyperemic, her sputum thick and tenacious, her mucopurulent discharge increasingly flecked with blood. The attending doctor, armed only with a Laennec's stethoscope, a bottle of aspirin, and some salicylate of soda, could do little as his patient's heaving lungs were progressively drowned by pulmonary edema. Subsequent damage to her bronchial tubes paved the way for secondary bacterial superinfection, allowing a fatal case of pneumonia to set in, and so it was that on January 25, 1920 Sophie Halberstadt, wife of the renowned photographer Max Halberstadt, and the fifth and best-loved child of Sigmund and Martha Freud, released her last belabored breath into the world, and then fell silent.

Her adoring father was devastated. In a January 27 letter to his associate Oskar Pfister, the Austrian neurologist lamented how "our sweet Sophie in Hamburg had been snatched away by influenzal pneumonia, snatched away in the midst of glowing health, from a full and active life as a competent mother and loving wife, all in four or five days, as though she had never existed . . . the undisguised brutality of our time is weighing heavily upon us." Two days later, Freud wrote to another colleague, Sándor Ferenczi, conveying the melancholy news: "Wafted away! Nothing to say." There was, it turned out, a great deal more to say, but Freud affected a certain sangfroid, telling Ferenczi that although his wife continued to be "very shaken," he felt that "la séance continue" — "the show goes on" — though "it was a bit much for one week." As Sophie's relatives grieved, Freud threw himself back into his work, and putting the finishing touches on *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, or *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, an essay his early biographer Fritz Wittels described as having been written while Freud was "under the pressure of the death of his blossoming daughter," a sort of cry "at the graveside of his daughter."

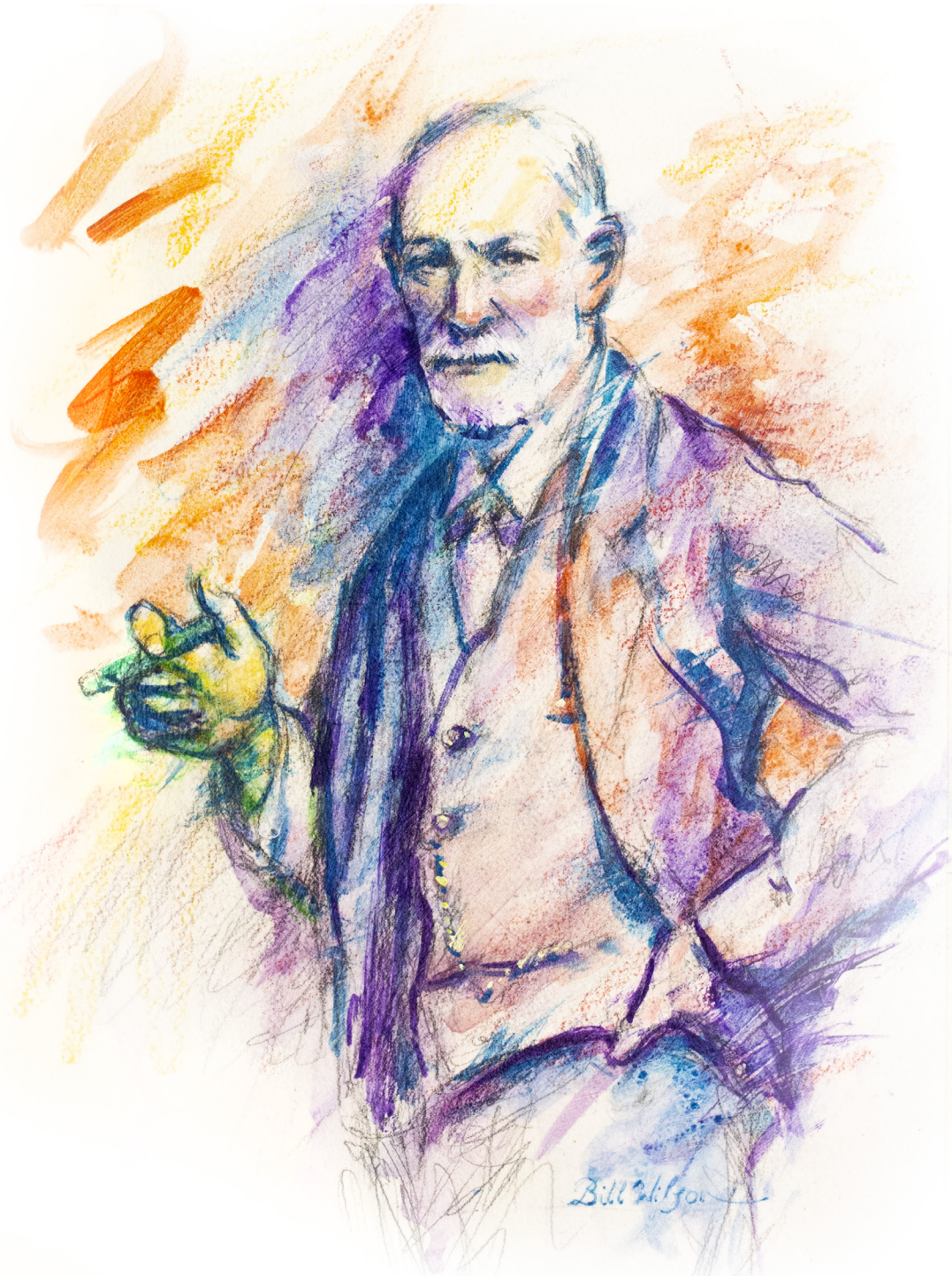


Matthew Omolesky is a human rights lawyer, a researcher in the field of cultural heritage preservation, and a Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute.

Freud had previously attributed human behavior largely to the actions of the libido, but things took a distinctly darker turn in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, and thenceforth his psychological drive doctrine would include the so-called *Todestrieb*, or “death drive,” which purportedly leads individuals to engage in destructive, aggressive, or compulsive behaviors wholly at odds with the self-preservative, harmonious, or creative forces conferred on them by the *Lustprinzip*. With the life instinct no longer the primary impelling force behind the id, human life became a *danse macabre* between Eros and Thanatos, in tune with the “oscillating rhythm in the life of organisms,” and driven by both (pro)creative urges and the “universal tendency of all living matter — to return to the peace of the inorganic world.” There is an argument to be made that Freud borrowed this concept from his student Wilhelm Stekel, who a decade earlier had examined how morbid obsessions could suppress sexual instincts, but ultimately it was Freud who popularized the idea of an inborn psychological death instinct.

The author of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* would later grant that while he, in his own psychoanalytical capacity, “would certainly

have insisted on the connection to be made between the death of a daughter and the concepts of the *Beyond* . . . on every analytical study involving someone else,” the majority of the work had already been written by the time Sophie fell victim to influenzal pneumonia. “The only part that was missing,” Freud insisted, was a (rather abstruse) passage on “the mortality and immortality of protozoa.” It is easy to see why the founder of psychoanalysis did not want such a fundamental theoretical revision attributed solely to his personal sense of loss. Sophie’s death was a tragedy, but it was one that Freud shared with tens of millions of parents who had lost their sons and daughters to bullets, shells, torpedoes, mustard gas, ethnic cleansing, starvation, typhus, and influenza in the grim preceding years. If psychoanalysis was as scientifically rigorous a field as he and his acolytes professed, no individual misfortune should play such a profound role in its wholesale reappraisal. Still, as Peter Gay noted, “the term ‘death drive’ — *Todestrieb* — entered his correspondence a week after Sophie Halberstadt’s death,” and therefore Freud’s “loss can claim a subsidiary role . . . [in] his analytic preoccupation with destructiveness.”



To be fair, it did not take his daughter's untimely demise for Freud to take an active interest in the transience of human life. No sentient person, bearing witness to the catastrophic events surrounding the First World War, could possibly have avoided it. Between 1914 and 1918, in far-flung places like Przemyśl, Kolubara, the Marne, the Somme, Verdun, Passchendaele, and Gallipoli, the Allies and Central Powers had erected vast hecatombs into which they relentlessly fed burnt offerings in the form of millions of their bravest fellow citizens — a human

The self-destructive spasms of iconoclastic violence and the invidious spread of critical race theory in recent years can be seen as a collective outbreak of afterwardsness.

sacrifice of unprecedented dimensions. In his 1915 meditation on the conflict, *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death*, Freud lapsed into a state bordering on despair:

We cannot but feel that no event has ever destroyed so much that is precious in the common possessions of humanity, confused so many of the clearest intelligences, or so thoroughly debased what is highest. Science herself has lost her impartiality; her deeply embittered servants seek for weapons from her with which to contribute towards the struggle with the enemy. Anthropologists feel driven to declare him inferior and degenerate, psychiatrists issue a diagnosis of his disease of mind or spirit.

Freud would conclude that “men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved, and who at the most can defend themselves; they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness,” as evidenced by that terrible conflict in which “all individual moral acquisitions were obliterated, and only the most primitive, the oldest, the crudest mental attitudes were left.”

For all that, the notion of an inherent death drive never really caught on amongst Freud's disciples, making it, as the Welsh psychoanalyst Ernest Jones later commented, “noteworthy in being the only one of Freud's which has received little acceptance on the part of his followers.” Freud himself acknowledged this reluctance: “the assumption of the existence of an instinct of death or destruction has met with resistance even in analytic circles. . . . To begin with it was only tentatively that I put forward the views I have developed here, but in the course of time they have gained such a hold on me that I can no longer think in any other way.” The reader may very well be exhibiting some resistance of his own towards the idea of an innate *Todestrieb*. After all, hasn't psychoanalysis been largely consigned to the dustbin of psychiatric history? Paul Johnson, in *Modern Times* (1985), persuasively argued that Freud's

methods of therapy have proved on the whole, costly failures, more suited to cosset the unhappy than cure the sick. We now know that many of the central ideas of psychoanalysis have no basis in biology. They were, indeed, formulated by Freud before the discovery of Mendel's Laws, the

chromosomal theory of inheritance, the recognition of inborn metabolic errors, the existence of hormones and the mechanism of the nervous impulse, which collectively invalidate them. As Sir Peter Medawar has put it, psychoanalysis is akin to Mesmerism and phrenology: it contains isolated nuggets of truth, but the general theory is false.

There is no denying that as a neurologist Sigmund Freud was a failure, if not an outright fraud. At the very least he was, in Henry de Montherlant's characteristically well-aimed assessment, an “obsessive who, as is the case in such vulgar cases, wished to communicate his own obsessions to everyone else [*Freud était un obsédé, qui voulait, comme il est de règle de la règle la plus vulgaire, communiquer son obsession à tous*].” His early experiments involving the therapeutic uses of cocaine rank, in the words of his critic Frederick Crews, “among the most careless research studies ever to see print,” though they did serve to justify his own addiction to the substance. His use of immobility and fattening regimens, hydrotherapy, electrotherapy, hysterectomies, and the excision of the clitoris were positively barbaric. At the beginning of his career, he regretted how he had “yet to help any patient,” and later on came to realize that “I am actually not at all a man of science, not an observer, not an experimenter, not a thinker. I am by temperament nothing but a conquistador — an adventurer, if you want it translated — with all the curiosity, daring, and tenacity characteristic of a man of this sort.” Shockingly, Sándor Ferenczi reported that his famous colleague once declared that “patients only serve to provide us with a livelihood and material to learn from. We certainly cannot help them.”

Yet Freud the social scientist is a different figure altogether. Many of his theories, though outlandish when applied to individuals, become (using Claude Lévi-Strauss' felicitous phrase) “good to think with” when considering society writ large. John Murray Cuddihy, in his provocative *The Ordeal of Civility: Freud, Marx, Lévi-Strauss and the Jewish Struggle with Modernity* (1974), cleverly demonstrated how Freud's conception of a primordial, “primitive” identity lurking beneath another “superimposed” identity happened to track perfectly the experience of Eastern European Jews as they assimilated into bourgeois Western European society, “allowing the ‘mechanical solidarity’ of Jewish identity to continue relatively undisturbed ‘beneath’ the modernization process.”

The time of life is no longer structured by sections, completions, thresholds, and transitions.

Tensions between the two coincident modes of living and thinking meant that “social unease became mental dis-ease.” Freud thereby provided a potent lens through which we can view any number of psychogenic or sociogenic mental disorders or phenomena.

Similarly, in light of the infamous Satanic panic, the McMartin preschool trial, and the epidemic of scandalously false recollections encouraged by “recovered memory therapy,” most of us have become justifiably dubious of the theory of “screen memories,” but the picture looks very different at the societal or civilizational level. Freud postulated the existence of *Nachträglichkeit* — also known as *après-coup*, deferred action, or “afterwardsness” — a neologism used to describe “belated understanding or retroactive

attribution of sexual or traumatic meaning to earlier events,” but when we broaden that idea to include the way “memory is reprinted, so to speak, in accordance with later experience,” we can comprehend how nations (“imagined communities”) continuously rewrite or even vandalize their own histories. As Cuddihy noted in *The Ordeal of Civility*, “political revolution achieves its deepest and most secret ambition in the rewriting of history itself,” an outgrowth of Freud’s assertion that, for better or worse, there are those for whom “everything begins in shame experiences.” The self-destructive spasms of iconoclastic violence and the invidious spread of critical race theory in recent years can be seen as a collective outbreak of afterwardsness, a more virulent variant of that wide-ranging affliction known as presentism. We may not take repression and the father complex seriously anymore, and again with good reason, but cultural *Vatermord*, or parricide, is alive and well, judging from “Classical Patricide,” Victor Davis

Above all, “it is a ‘too much,’ not a ‘too little,’ that is making us sick,” Han maintains.

Hanson’s recent *New Criterion* piece on the ongoing war against the formal study of the classics. We are now seeing what happens when, as Freud wrote in *Totem and Taboo*, “the restrictions of deferred obedience [are] no longer held,” and how the need to “repeat the crime of parricide again and again” arises “as a result of the changing conditions of life.”

The “death drive” constitutes another Freudian theory that is “good to think with,” at least according to the Korean-born, Berlin-based philosopher Byung-Chul Han, who has become one of our era’s leading critics of neoliberalism. Born in 1959 and originally a metallurgist by training, Han moved to Germany in the 1980s in order to study philosophy, producing a dissertation on Martin Heidegger while at Freiburg, and then going on to author a series of slender, aphoristic masterpieces, which only in recent years have begun appearing in English thanks to the Polity Press. These include *The Burnout Society*, *The Scent of Time*, *Saving Beauty*, and *The Disappearance of Rituals*, each of which explores different facets of modernity, typically emphasizing the hyperkinesia, spiritual and aesthetic deterioration, and social atomization of contemporary life, while preaching the need for a renewed *vita contemplativa*, the better to frustrate the hollowness and “deadly hyper-activity” of our times.

In *The Disappearance of Rituals*, Han elucidates how the transition from analog to digital life has meant that “symbolic perception is gradually being replaced by a serial perception that is incapable of producing the experience of duration.” “Binge viewing,” for instance, becomes “comatose viewing,” and thus

the neoliberal regime pushes serial perception, reinforces the serial habitus. It intentionally abolishes duration in order to drive more consumption. The permanent process of updating, which has now extended to all areas of life, does not permit the development of any duration or allow for any completion. The ever-present compulsion of production leads to a de-housing [Enthausung], making life more contingent, transient and unstable. But dwelling requires duration.

Time has decayed into a “mere sequence of point-like moments,” Han writes in *The Scent of Time*, while society,

deprived of heritage and memory, amounts to little more than a hodgepodge of “information or commodities.” As life becomes more rushed, and the public more atomized, we lack an “ordering force,” the implications of which are profound. “Formative or decisive caesuras are absent from life. The time of life is no longer structured by sections, completions, thresholds, and transitions. Instead, there is a rush from one present to the next and an aging without growing old. Finally, one perishes in non-time. This is what makes dying today more difficult than ever.”

In his most recent book, *Capitalism and the Death Drive* (2021), Han pursues this line of reasoning further, using Freud’s theory of the *Todestrieb* to analyze the increasingly lethal instincts of late liberalism. It should be noted that when Han discusses “capitalism,” he is not referring to the various forms of free-market economics found in Max Weber’s traditional typology — primitive booty capitalism, pariah capitalism, legal-rational capitalism, and so on — but rather the cynically self-serving racket of present-day neoliberalism, notable for its income polarization, its almost pathological need to stimulate consumer demand, and above all the “ever-increasing rent-seeking practices of oligopolistic capital,” as José Gabriel Palma put it in a prescient 2009 essay, adding that

Capitalism can be reconstructed as a system with asymmetric “compulsions” — minimum for oligopolistic capital, maximum for workers and small and medium firms . . . Only in capitalism are there continuous pressures from competitive struggles, which lead to the need to constantly improve the forces of production. Therefore, as Alice in Alice in Wonderland, only in capitalism is it necessary to run just to stay in the same place. However, what has emerged in practice from the neo-liberal experiment is a system in



which some have been left with all the running, while others have preferred to catch a lift.

Under neoliberalism, Palma posited, oligarchs are able to “regain the upper hand via an economic environment that was permanently unstable and highly insecure for the majority of the population and the state. That is, one that could have the necessary debilitating effect both on workers and the state. In this kind of environment a highly mobile and malleable factor of production (especially finance capital) would have an unrivaled power to thrive.”

This hollowness is now a characteristic of even the most fundamental aspects of our lives, often hiding in plain sight.

This intentional weakening of civil society is only possible with the help of the politico-media complex, which can almost instantly manufacture what Palma calls a “spontaneous consensus-type of hegemony,” using the “necessary facade of ‘modernity’ for this spontaneous consensus.” Yet this supposedly voluntary consensus, like your smartphone’s software, remains subject to Han’s “permanent process of updating.” Consider how, to take but one prominent example, we have in a matter of months gone from “Stop wearing face masks. #coronavirus” (Rep. Eric Swalwell) and “not having a mask does not necessarily put you at any increased risk of contracting this disease” (Executive Director of the WHO Health Emergencies Program Michael Ryan) to “a face mask is more guaranteed to protect me against COVID than when I take a COVID vaccine” (former CDC Director Robert Redfield) to “vaccinated people do not carry the virus, don’t get sick, and that’s not just in the clinical trials, but it’s also in real world data” (current CDC Director Rochelle Walensky) to the return of universal masking combined with vaccination green passes or quasi-mandates, with each laughably contradictory permutation defended to the hilt by the very same people. Such is the “serial habitus” of our post-modern existence, with everything from deeply-held moral considerations to unambiguous scientific statements inevitably proving “contingent, transient, and unstable.” Truth, Han wearily concludes, has become a “temporal phenomenon,” made “void” by the “tearing away of time” and the “shrinking and fleeting” nature of the present.

Above all, “it is a ‘too much,’ not a ‘too little,’ that is making us sick,” Han maintains, echoing Leopold Kohr’s unassailable maxim that “wherever something is wrong, something is too big.” Just how sick these compulsions are making us is the subject of the succinct, limpid essays and transcribed interviews that comprise *Capitalism and the Death Drive*. Capitalism has traditionally been understood as resting, as Han notes early in his treatise, on the “negation of death,” given that “capital is accumulated as a defense against death, against absolute loss;” indeed “death is what accounts for the compulsion of production and growth.” In *De La Démocratie en Amérique*, Alexis de Tocqueville famously attributed Americans’ “taste for material enjoyments,” “restiveness,” and “inconstancy” to their “unceasing trepidation” in the face of death — “He who has confined his heart solely to the search for the goods of this world is always in a hurry . . . In addition to the goods that he possesses, at each instant

he imagines a thousand others that death will prevent him from enjoying if he does not hasten.” Such a worldview has the benefit of stimulating a Brobdingnagian appetite for consumption and attendant growth-friendly policies, but “what we nowadays call ‘growth,’” Han protests, “is in reality random, cancerous proliferation,” a “frenzy of production and growth that seems like a frenzy of death. It is a simulation of vitality that conceals a deadly impending catastrophe.” Citing Walter Benjamin, Han suggests that “humankind’s self-alienation may have reached a tipping point ‘where it can experience its own annihilation as a supreme aesthetic pleasure.’” We are starting to short-circuit, in other words, and we don’t even seem to mind all that much. “A queer instinct indeed,” Sigmund Freud wondered aloud in his 1933 *New Introductory Lecture on Psycho-Analysis*, “directed to the destruction of its own organic home!”

Han blames all of this on a “paradoxical death drive.” The “separation of life and death that is constitutive of the capitalist economy creates an *undead life, death in life*,” wherein life is deprived of life. The “striving for life without death creates the necropolis — an antiseptic space of death, cleansed of human sounds and smells. Life processes are transformed into mechanical processes. The total adaptation of human life to mere functionality is already a culture of death . . . In the hope of survival, we accumulate dead value, capital. The living world is being destroyed by dead capital. This is the death drive of capital. Capitalism is ruled by a *necrophilia* that turns living beings into lifeless things.” A bleak picture, but one that explains how cityscapes became dominated by aggressively ugly, sterile, but supposedly functional brutalism and sprawl, how our public spaces are governed by the cursed energy of social distancing floor decals and counterproductive plastic barriers, and most fitting of all, how children — their bright young faces obscured by soiled linen — are subjected to a “zombie check” and forced by teachers and administrators to “zombie walk” so as to maintain a physical distance from classmates, in a perverse enactment of the modern-day necrophilia Han so insightfully describes.

This hollowness is now a characteristic of even the most fundamental aspects of our lives, often hiding in plain sight. Our undoubtedly efficient factory farms are able to feed our ever-growing populace, but soil depletion and genetic engineering have led to what Donald Davis and his University of Texas biochemistry research team found to be “reliable declines” in “the amount of protein, calcium, phosphorus, iron, riboflavin (vitamin B2) and vitamin C” found in fruits and vegetables over the past half century. Some two billion people now suffer from “hidden hunger,” as calorie intake is wholly decoupled from nutritional intake, and deficiencies in iron, zinc, calcium, magnesium, and selenium take a toll on global public health. Hidden toxins like xenoestrogens, microplastics, and glyphosate abound, while e-waste proliferates, and rare earth mining concerns bring about water shortages and acidified landscapes. Near the Inner Mongolian city of Baotou, one can find “a murky expanse of water, in which no fish or algae can survive. The shore is coated with a black crust, so thick you can walk on it. Into this huge, 10-square-kilometer tailings pond nearby factories discharge water loaded with chemicals used to process the 17 most sought after minerals in the world.” Nearby townfolk in Xinguang Sancun, meanwhile, have reported an epidemic of osteoporosis, diabetes, and respiratory issues, and the population has largely fled. Xinguang Sancun is now literally a necropolis, while we, having materially benefitted from its demise, inhabit a spiritual necropolis, one insulated (for now) from what the German psychologist Ludwig Klages castigated as the “foul orgy of destruction with which ‘civilized’ or ‘moral’ man defiles the face of the planet — the last offspring of the horrid drama which we are pleased to call the spiritual development or even progress of mankind.”

“Death, understood as the biological end of life, is not the only, or only true, form of death,” Han reminds us. “Death can also be understood as a continuous process in which one gradually loses oneself, one’s identity, over the course of a lifetime. In this way, death may begin before death.” The concept of “social death” usually arises in the context of physical and cultural genocide, but Han suggests that it is a symptom of modernity itself. Claudia Card, in her 2003 article “Genocide and Social Death,” wrote of how “social vitality exists through relationships, contemporary and intergenerational, that create an identity that gives meaning to a life.” Atomization saps this vitality, as does the disappearance of rituals, hyperkinesia, and the stifling bio-medical surveillance state. As the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben pointedly asked at the beginning of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, “What is a society that has no other value than survival?” The phenomenon Han calls the “ugly cancerous growth of undead life” should be opposed at all costs, lest we become “too alive to die, and too dead to live.”

The next consideration, of course, is: *What Is To Be Done?* Nikolay Chernyshevsky’s answer to that question, which provided the title of his most famous work, led us down a revolutionary road paved with utilitarianism, utopianism, materialism, rationalism,

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and egoism, eventually bringing us to this unfortunate impasse. The Bulgarian-French philosopher and psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva, in *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt* (2001), preached a different kind of resistance:

The question I would like to examine — from the somewhat narrow though not socially irrelevant perspectives of private life, psychological life, art, and literature — is the necessity of a culture of revolt in a society that is alive and developing, not stagnating. In fact, if such a culture did not exist, life would become a life of death, that is, a life of physical and moral violence, barbarity. This is a matter of survival of our civilizations and their freest and most enlightened components. There is an urgent need to develop the culture of revolt starting with our aesthetic heritage and to find new variants of it. Heidegger thought that only religion could save us; faced with the religious and political impasses of our time, an experience of revolt may be the only thing that can save us from the automation of humanity that is threatening us. This revolt is under way, but it has not yet found its voice, any more than it has found the harmony likely to give it the dignity of beauty. And it might not.

Is Byung-Chul Han the one to lead, ideologically at least, an Evola-esque *rivolta contro il mondo moderno*? Han himself is not particularly sanguine when it comes to the prospects of such an uprising. One of the chapters in *Capitalism and the Death Drive*, “Why Revolution Is Impossible Today,” examines how opposition to the system-preserving power of the neoliberal state

is hamstrung by the fact that “the subordinated subject is not even aware of its insubordination,” and in fact “believes itself to be free. . . . Restricting freedom quickly provokes resistance. Exploiting freedom does not.” As we have seen, this only works if the regime is able to implement a “spontaneous consensus-type of hegemony,” which in turn requires citizens to have what Ryszard Legutko calls an easily manipulated “thin view of the self,” as opposed to the “thick selves” that have a protective carapace conferred by nationalism, moral absolutism, or religious belief. In a similar vein, Bertrand de Jouvenel’s *On Power: The Natural History of its Growth* (1945) systematically demonstrates how even liberal democracies will instinctively “attack centrifugal tendencies,” eventually leading to “the darkness of a formless mass, destined to despotism or anarchy.”

The victory of modernity over tradition appears to be more or less complete. Contemporary conservatism, as Michael Malice is fond of saying, typically manifests itself as “progressivism driving the speed limit.” Integralism, once an ideology that viewed the state as an organic whole dependent on its unique admixture of inherited hierarchies, history, and geography, has become a vehicle for quixotic theocratic ambitions, as modern-day religious integralists fantasize about subordinating temporal power to ecclesiastical authority, while actual clerical officialdom in the West liberalizes its own institutions and eagerly subordinates itself to state interests, viz. the crucial role of religious non-profits and dioceses in lucrative immigrant “newcomer settlement services.” The “Benedict Option,” like Byung-Chul Han’s *vita contemplativa*, offers a way to slip out from underneath, but not a way to actively oppose, neoliberalism’s “commercialization of all aspects of life” and “total exploitation of the human being.”

The pandemic, with its encouragement of a “survival society that is ultimately based on a fear of death,” has only accelerated recent trends. The “hysteria of survival,” Han remarks, “makes society so inhumane,” but the “digital biopolitical surveillance” methods developed in China lend themselves to the kind of “autocratic surveillance state” supposedly required to combat the spread of an aerosolized coronavirus. Hence the rise of green passports (revocable if one falls behind on one’s messenger RNA booster injections), quarantine-enforcing apps that utilize facial recognition and geolocation, the construction of prefabricated quarantine lazarettos, and other public measures undertaken in the United States, Canada, Australia, Israel, and any number of other jurisdictions besides, any one of which threatens to establish a veritable bio-medical panopticon. “Seen in this way,” Han argues, “the virus marks the change of an era.” We were already inhabiting a world of “digital feudalism” and “surveillance capitalism,” and now the pandemic has broken down “the barrier which has hitherto prevented the biopolitical expansion of surveillance into the sphere of the individual,” a development prefigured in C.S. Lewis’ dystopian trans-humanist fairy-tale *That Hideous Strength* (1945). But this is something of a mask-off moment, and it will be very difficult for the neoliberal regime to market itself “as a form of freedom” going forward, thereby providing something of an opening for its critics, even if in the short term it presages nothing good for basic human liberties.

Thankfully there is nothing invincible about a society predicated on atomization and just-in-time McKinsey-ism. “These forces,” Evola opined, “devoid of connection with any higher principle, are in fact, on a short chain.” One suspects that a well-timed truckers’ strike might bring it to its knees in a matter of days. Taking a broader view, Henry de Montherlant cautioned against untoward histrionics:

Everything is dying and being born in every moment: bodies, nature, perhaps even ideas. This epoch is like all other epochs: the things dominating it is are but simple variations of mood in the history of mankind. One could speak of the agony caused by our civilization, but I would not cry over this agony... Life will find other ways, being protean. Spare civilizations are not lacking. Those who linger over the ruins of wars or revolutions are those who do not feel within themselves the power to do something new. Let us deplore it all, but briefly. And then, let's start all over again.

We have seen how Freud postulated an “oscillating rhythm” in the life of organisms, just as the medieval Arab historian Ibn Khaldun postulated a waxing and waning of *asabiyya* (solidarity) in order to explain the rise and inevitable fall of empires. “Dynasties have a natural life span like individuals,” wrote Ibn Khaldun in his magisterial *Muqaddimah*, and they appear to have death drives as well. Late liberalism’s *Todestrieb* necessarily implies a terminal point that will be arrived at sooner or later, given the ruinous feedback loop of many of its policies, but it also implies a point of departure, a moment of rebirth. Thanatos is nothing without Eros, and vice versa.

Arthur Schnitzler, Freud’s contemporary, had an ambiguous relationship with psychoanalysis, but nonetheless accepted the premise of a death drive, and even elaborated upon it in his 1927 *Buch Der Sprüche und Bedenken*: “There are all kinds of flight from responsibility. There is a flight into death, a flight into sickness,

and finally a flight into stupidity. The last is the least dangerous and most comfortable, since even for clever people the journey is not as long as they might fondly imagine.” Despite our pervasive fear of death, we are, as Byung-Chul Han observes, “currently living through a frenzy of production and growth that seems like a frenzy of death.” We have undertaken a flight into the real and imagined diseases of modernity. And of the flight into stupidity, perhaps the less said, the better. For the individual, the latter only seems less dangerous, of course; for society as a whole, it surely must count as the most perilous trajectory. All three are, in the end, flights towards oblivion, and it was the peerless aphorist Nicolás Gómez Dávila who rightly warned that “everything rolls towards death, but only what is worthless rolls towards oblivion [*todo rueda hacia la muerte, pero sólo lo carente de valor hacia la nada*].”

It is terrible to contemplate how much of the world around us is defined by a mindless death drive, by an impetuous cascade towards nothingness. Yet the hegemonic neoliberal discourse has at least provided us with a helpful concept in this regard. I believe it is known as *schöpferische Zerstörung* — the gale of creative destruction, out of which we might follow the lead of Byung-Chul Han and begin to build a world of ethics, morals, truth, fidelity, and beauty, a world that is alive and developing, not automated and stagnating, a world un beholden to the “immanence of consumption,” and better equipped to resist the “undisguised brutality of our time” that presently weighs so heavily upon us. 🐘

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Bright Star, Green Light: An Enchanting Revisit of John Keats and F. Scott Fitzgerald

Their poetry and prose capture the universal rapture, torment, and longing of the human soul.

by Leonora Cravotta

Fans of John Keats (1795-1821) and F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940) have a reason to celebrate. Esteemed Shakespearean scholar Sir Jonathan Bate's recently published book *Bright Star, Green Light: The Beautiful Works and Damned Lives of John Keats and F. Scott Fitzgerald* (USA: September 2021) is a delightful exploration of the lives and works of these two legendary writers. Deploying Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* as a narrative prototype, Bate posits that the British-born poet and the American novelist, despite being separated by a century and an ocean, led analogous existences in terms of personal experiences; perceptions of love, beauty, and art; and the cultivation of their respective literary muses.

Bright Star, Green Light is a copiously researched cornucopia of Keats' and Fitzgerald's biographical milestones, personal statements, and commentary from their friends and literary acquaintances. It is peppered with text exegesis. The book's title is an amalgamation of Keats' poem *Bright Star* which was believed to have been written for his love Fanny Brawne; the green light at the end of Daisy Buchanan's dock which

Jay Gatsby watches from across the sound in Fitzgerald's third and arguably best novel *The Great Gatsby* (1925); and *The Beautiful and Damned* (1922), the novelist's lesser-known second novel.

Bate introduces his parallel lives argument by highlighting the broad commonalities between the two writers. They both died young; Keats at age 25 from tuberculosis and Fitzgerald at age 43 from a cardiac arrest which was likely exacerbated by years of excessive drinking. They both experienced disappointment in their romantic lives: Keats in his unconsummated relationship with Fanny and Fitzgerald in his unrequited courtship with Ginevra King and challenging relationship with his wife Zelda Sayre. They also both experienced far more posthumous fame and success than they did during their lifetimes, although Fitzgerald and Zelda enjoyed a certain level of society-page celebrity status.

Bate maintains that to fully understand Keats and Fitzgerald, or any other writer for that matter, one needs to be familiar with their literary influences and to comprehend the extent to which they have permeated the writer's psyche and consequently resurfaced in his work. In *Bright Star, Green Light*, Bate asserts that Fitzgerald's works are reflective of his admiration for Keats in the same

manner that Keats' poetry evinces his affinity for Shakespeare, Milton, and Spencer.

The author engages readers who are very familiar with Fitzgerald and Keats but also provides enough context to entice readers who have only a cursory familiarity with them. Bate illustrates Fitzgerald's long-term study of and advocacy for Keats' poetry, which began with his reading of Sidney Colvin's *John Keats: His Life and Poetry, His Friends, Critics and After Fame* (1917). Widely known examples are referenced such as Fitzgerald's paying homage to Keats' poem *Ode to a Nightingale* with the title of his fourth book *Tender Is the Night* (1934), a creative decision with which his editors disagreed.

Bate provides vivid anecdotes of Fitzgerald extolling the beauty and lyricism of Keats' poetry, including a letter to his daughter Scottie who was at the time a student at Vassar College. Fitzgerald wrote:

Poetry is either something that lives like a fire inside you-like music to the musician or Marxism to the communist-or else it is nothing, an empty formalized bore around which pedants can endlessly drone their notes and explanations. Anyone who has studied Keats' best poems—the odes, the best of the sonnets, Isabella and The Eve of St. Agnes would

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ever afterwards be able to 'distinguish between gold and dross in what one read' In themselves those eight poems are a scale of workmanship for anybody who wants to know truly about words, their most utter value for evocation, persuasion or charm.

Fitzgerald, who later became involved with Sheilah Graham in reaction to Zelda's increasing mental and physical decline, submitted his new paramour to a literary appreciation litmus test by reading aloud to her from Keats' *Ode to a Grecian Urn*. When Graham leaned in inquisitively and inquired as to who wrote the poem, he realized that despite her lack of formal education, she possessed an innate appreciation for beautiful poetry that captures the "universal longings" of the human soul and consequently deemed her intellectually and emotionally worthy of his romantic love. Fitzgerald would later seek to further educate Graham by enrolling her in what he called his "college of one," where Keats figured prominently on the reading list.

Bright Star, Green Light's strongest sections are those dedicated to Fitzgerald, particularly the chapters which provide more contextual background on the development of his novels. Although readers who have avidly read Fitzgerald's collective body of work, Zelda's writing, and the more well-known biographies such as Matthew J. Bruccoli's *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur: The Life of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (1981) would likely be familiar with the genesis of his novels, Bate has so artfully nuanced these backstory nuggets that they come across as shining new revelations. The chapters focusing on *Tender is the Night* and Fitzgerald's final and unfinished novel *The Last Tycoon* (1941) were especially evocative.

Keats is believed to have written *Bright Star* to memorialize his love for Fanny Brawne although there is some historical dispute as to whether he wrote the poem just before he died or the previous year. Since Keats realized that he was dying and likely would never

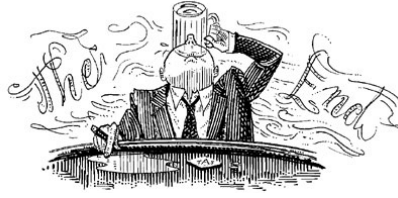


see Fanny again, the poem's palpable sensuality can be retrospectively viewed as a romantic elegy. He wrote: "No-yet still steadfast, still unchangeable, pillowed upon my fair love's ripening breast, to feel forever its soft fall and swell, awake for ever in a sweet unrest, still to hear her tender-taken breath, and so live ever-or else swoon to death." Bate argues that Fitzgerald created Daisy's "green light" to which *Gatsby* looks longingly as a tribute to Keats.

If *Bright Star, Green Light* can be criticized, the fault lies in Bate's zeal to force the parallels between his two subjects. For instance, the author dedicates a fair amount of text to demonstrating commonalities between Fitzgerald and Keats' perspectives on romantic love. He specifically endeavors to draw comparisons between Keats' love for Fanny and Fitzgerald's initial infatuation with Ginevra King and his marriage to Zelda. While there is historical evidence that Keats was engaged to Fanny and that she mourned his death for six years before marrying another, it strains credulity to compare their relationship to Fitzgerald's with Zelda. Keats' romance with Fanny is tragic because it was nipped before it had a chance to bloom. By contrast, Fitzgerald's connection to Zelda had a hot house flower vitality that was never fully snuffed out despite their extravagant lifestyle, professional rivalry, mutual infidelity, his excessive drinking, and her degenerating physical and mental health.

Jonathan Bate concludes *Bright Star, Green Light* by reinforcing the present-day relevance of his subjects: "Under the shadow cast by global damnation, the loveliness of Keats' poems and Fitzgerald's novels increases. Their works will not endure forever, but in dark times they can at least bring moments of joy." I do believe that Bate is wrong about the permanence of his subjects' legacy. Their beautiful, poignant works will be preserved for eternity and future generations will continue to appreciate how these master storytellers used poetry and prose to capture and reflect the universal rapture, torment, and longing of the human soul. ❀





Will the Real Obsolete Man Please Stand Up?

An empty, pointless transience overwhelms America.

by Daniel J. Flynn

BRIMFIELD, Mass. — “We are living in a throwaway culture,” Pope Francis observed this summer. “What is useless is discarded.”

The pope speaks of people, specifically the elderly, the unborn, and the disabled, i.e., the inefficient. Disposable, however, seems an all-purpose adjective for our age.

Some people rebel against their times. They gather for six days three times a year in Brimfield, Massachusetts.

“There’s truth to the old phrase, ‘They don’t make things like they used to,’” tattooed thirtysomething Ryan Piccirillo, proprietor of Memory Hole Vintage, comments as he offers a Betty Boop statue for sale. “A hundred years from now the antiques we have today will still be the antiques that are collected. I don’t think much of the stuff that’s manufactured in 2021 is going to be collectable in 2121 because it will all have deteriorated and broken. They build in obsolescence to the products they create and they just break and wear down, whereas the stuff that was made 100 years ago was built to last.”

At the Brimfield Antiques Show, a WABAC machine disguised as a high-end flea market, one encounters old stage lights belonging in the present under the spotlight, so-antiquated-that-they-appear-futuristic diving helmets that take our breath away,

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long-silenced National Cash Registers bellowing the big cha-ching, vintage Kodaks coming into focus of the cellphones of passersby, and Underwood typewriters the subject rather than the instrument of scribes. They put the “super” in superannuated.

Used objects reincarnated as curios defend the past from the present’s slurs against it. And 21st Century Man, narcissistically horrified by relic-reminders of his own inadequacy, by nature recoils. Throwaway culture lacks the conscious ideology inspiring the recent mania for ancestor character assassination and the Talibaning of statuary. It nevertheless speeds toward the same destination over the horizon from our forebears. In stubbornly remaining with us, the artifacts advertise the greatness of a past and the fragile present. What of ours escapes the landfill?

“Some stuff I see here could be considered garbage,” admits Ron Miller of Connecticut’s Unexpected Treasures. “Generally, a lot of people here respect older things. Then you have people coming through who want things that remind them of their childhood, remind them of a different era — or they collect.”

Robin Snyder, a flea-market veteran who traveled to Brimfield from Gratz, Pennsylvania, sold a chrome, oblong-spinning 1954 peanut roaster for \$750 to a barista who was hoping to use it as a functional conversation-piece in her coffee shop. “Even the young people who come here like to reuse the stuff that they buy,” he explains. “Young interior

designers here buy to reuse it. Outside of here, it is a throwaway society.” But the recycling he most frequently sees involves not repurposing but buyers seeking to “relive their childhood.”

Did our utilitarian consumer culture rub off from the things we buy onto the treatment of human beings around us or did our devaluing of unproductive people rub off on our Ikeaish buying habits?

The function-over-form cult of efficiency, for reasons sometimes understandable yet always obnoxious, forbids cars adorned with something like a ’57 Chevy’s space-age fins or a radio with Philco’s art-deco, tombstone design. Declaring a collectible, cool factor, as NFTs and Funko Pop! do, immediately misses the point in its immediacy. Real cool, as the underwhelming sales of the ’57 Chevy indicates, develops organically.

The anachronisms saved from the dustbin of today require time, care, space, and money — just like the discarded people the pope discussed do. An empty, pointless transience overwhelming a sense of the permanent serves as the common characteristic for the de-valuers of people and their products. And even the human curios invading Brimfield who emit a vibe of prizing things above people at least possess an appreciation for beauty which those who decry the ugliness of the great human discard.

Where is a television repairman, seamstress, or cobbler when you need one? Our motto as humans at some point became: If it is broke, don’t fix it. 🐛

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