

**RANDALL TERRY
SHOOTS AN AD**
MATT LABASH

the weekly

Standard

OCTOBER 22, 2012

\$4.95

LIBERALISM, MANIC & DEPRESSIVE

A close-up photograph of Fred Barnes, an older man with grey hair, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a blue and white striped tie. He is laughing heartily, with his mouth wide open and eyes squinted.

**FRED BARNES
NOEMIE EMERY
ANDREW FERGUSON
STEPHEN F. HAYES
WILLIAM KRISTOL**



Contents

October 22, 2012 • Volume 18, Number 6



- 4 The Scrapbook *Against Big Bird, don't speak & more*
- 7 Casual *Fred Barnes's Polish errand*
- 8 Editorials
Liberalism, Manic & Depressive BY WILLIAM KRISTOL
Obama Didn't Save Us BY FRED BARNES
The Benghazi Scandal BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

Articles

- 12 Staggering Idiocy BY ANDREW FERGUSON
Panicky progressives struggle for reasons to support Obama
- 14 Big Bird Is Big Business BY JONATHAN V. LAST
PBS's well-feathered nest
- 16 Confusion or Coverup? BY THOMAS JOSCELYN
What we knew about the Benghazi attack and when we knew it
- 19 Who'll Get Thrown Off the Island? BY ETHAN EPSTEIN
The greater East Asian co-hostility sphere
- 20 Back in the USSR? BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL
Georgia elects an oligarch
- 22 Indiana vs. Obamacare BY CLAUDIA ANDERSON & WILLIAM ANDERSON
A conflict of visions

Features

- 25 Randall Terry Shoots an Ad BY MATT LABASH
The anti-abortion crusader's latest campaign
- 34 Addicted to Race BY NOEMIE EMERY
The left's long twilight struggle against imaginary bigotry

Books & Arts

- 38 Comedy Isn't Pretty BY CHARLOTTE ALLEN
The religulous journey of Bill Maher
- 42 The Wonder Man BY JOHN CHECK
A second opinion on Mozart's final days
- 44 The Lady Is a Lamp BY EMILY SCHULTHEIS
What you don't know about the Statue of Liberty
- 46 The Kids Are Alright BY ZACK MUNSON
And maybe the target should be their parents
- 47 Harmonious BY JOHN PODHORETZ
Young love and young standards sound good
- 48 Parody *If the Muppet's a hit, you must acquit*

Against Big Bird

Here's what THE SCRAPBOOK learned last week: Democrats believe any suggestion that taxpayers shouldn't have to subsidize the Public Broadcasting Service—even if it means continually borrowing from China—is off the table, a political third rail, strictly taboo. Republicans seem to believe the opposite, especially in light of public television's substantial income (see Jonathan V. Last's "Big Bird Is Big Business" on page 14)—although some think that Mitt Romney might have been wiser to choose, say, Bill Moyers as the personification of PBS, rather than Big Bird.

Alas, THE SCRAPBOOK must respectfully disagree with that last point. In fact, we thought Romney was making an unassailably good point about deficit spending until that moment when he told Jim Lehrer, "I love Big Bird." It may surprise Mitt Romney, and anybody else who regards Big Bird as a national treasure, that not every American loves Big Bird, and that a not-insignificant percentage of Americans actually loathe Big Bird, THE SCRAPBOOK among them. We think Romney was being too nice about PBS in general, and Big Bird in particular.

Part of this, we confess, is a larger discomfort with the whole *Sesame Street* enterprise. A program that was intended, in 1969, to serve as a kind

of televised version of Head Start—giving inner-city kids the rudiments of elementary education and moral instruction—has, in its 43 years, enjoyed about the same rate of demonstrable success as Head Start itself: which is to say, practically none. Almost from the beginning, the predominant *Sesame Street* audience has been the youth division of the wider PBS demographic: affluent, suburban, overwhelmingly white. Do these kids really need taxpayer-subsidized assistance to learn the alphabet or subtraction or the varieties of sexual orientation? For that matter, would anyone argue that since the invention of *Sesame Street*, American youth has grown more, not less, literate?

Which brings us to Big Bird. THE SCRAPBOOK has nothing whatsoever against birds—in fact, to paraphrase Governor Romney, we love birds—but Big Bird bears the same relation to birds that aircraft carriers bear to fish. It's a different species altogether. Big Bird neither looks, sounds, thinks, nor behaves like any creature we see at the backyard feeder. Big Bird does, however, look precisely like what he is: an oversized, garish-yellow, awkward, whining, infantile artifact of the 1970s, complete with "feathers" that look more like shag carpeting than anything found in nature. Indeed, the

only bird to which Big Bird bears any resemblance at all is the dodo, extinct now for three and a half centuries.

Of course, if Big Bird were just the oafish avian he appears to be, THE SCRAPBOOK might be less emphatic on this subject. But we have a long memory, and remain traumatized by recollections of *Big Bird in China* (1983), a joint project of the Children's Television Workshop and China Central Television in Beijing. This was a long, friendly, lachrymose travelogue—available on DVD, by the way—featuring Big Bird careening around the People's Republic, soaking in the party line, even singing a duet with a winsome young Maoist.

This may come as a revelation to Big Bird's admirers in the media, but the People's Republic of China was an even more repressive Communist dictatorship then than it is now. The old mass murderer Mao himself had died just seven years before *Big Bird in China*, and aftershocks from the catastrophic Cultural Revolution—when millions died—could still be felt when Big Bird was prancing along the Great Wall. Is it conceivable that public television would ever have dispatched Big Bird as a goodwill ambassador to Fascist Italy or Nazi Germany or Pol Pot's Cambodia? Of course not.

Or at least, we hope not. ♦

Revolt of the Drivers

Yes, we've chronicled the saga of the Chevy Volt before, but THE SCRAPBOOK is nothing if not tenacious when it comes to documenting public-private partnerships in stupidity. The latest word on the Volt is that it has suffered a crushing PR blow. Lyle Dennis is the founder of HybridCars.com, GM-Volt.com, and a member of General Motors' consumer advisory board for the Volt. (Given the car's dismal sales, we don't anticipate that last gig is too time-consuming.) Last week, he shocked the electric vehicle

community, such that it is, by announcing he was getting rid of his Chevy Volt to purchase a new electric vehicle from Ford.

"I take pride in the role I played encouraging GM to produce the car and in helping to build public support. . . . I always imagined I would own the car for 20 or 30 years," wrote an anguished Dennis in a blog post at InsideEVs.com. Dennis, however, has a wife and three kids and can no longer cope with one of the Volt's shortcomings. "The problem is, as great as the Volt is, it only has four seats." Who would have thought that having a massive battery

in the middle of the car would make families reticent to own one? Someone should alert GM's consumer advisory board about this problem.

At first, Dennis thought that he could cope with the car's lack of seats. "Since we only occasionally take long family drives, we figured we would rent a car for those trips." Again, can you imagine telling families looking to spend \$40,000 on a car that if they don't want to leave one of their kids at home, they should just rent a car? (In fairness, the Volt's price tag is only \$32,500 after the rest of us subsidize the purchase with tax credits.)

Dennis, as it happens, wanted to take his family to the beach this summer and disaster struck. “We reserved a rental car and when we went to pick it up the day of our trip, there was an error and no cars were available,” he reports. “We had no choice but to pack five of us into the Volt, and my wife and I took turns sitting with our daughter on our lap in one of the back seats. It was awfully uncomfortable and technically dangerous.”

As a result, Dennis has just purchased Ford’s new electric vehicle, the C-MAX Energi. The Energi has a fifth seat. It also has a starting price of \$33,745, before a more modest \$3,750 tax rebate. And did we mention that Ford wasn’t bailed out by taxpayers?

If even the most loyal consumers are rebelling against the Volt, the Obama administration’s ongoing obsession with Chevy Volts looks even more appalling. Speaking of which, last week, Rep. Mike Kelly noted that on May 7, the State Department approved \$108,000 for a new electric car charging station to service Chevy Volts in the motor pool at the Vienna embassy. Kelly also revealed that on May 3, the State Department denied a request for use of a DC-3 airplane to a Special Forces group doing embassy security in Libya. Ambassador Chris Stevens, slain in a terrorist attack in Benghazi on September 11, was copied on the email from the State Department. ♦

Alexis de Eberstadt

SCRAPBOOK readers will be familiar with the work of Nicholas Eberstadt, the nation’s bravest and most prescient demographer, from his appearances in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *National Interest*, and (of course!) THE WEEKLY STANDARD. For 30 years Eberstadt has written eloquently of, and demonstrated pitilessly, the devastating moral and economic consequences of tyranny in the world, from China to the old Soviet Union to North Korea. And now, just in time for the election, he has published *A Nation of Takers* (Templeton Press) about a subtler form of tyranny closer to home—the “soft tyranny” that



HE DISAPPEARED QUITE SLOWLY, UNTIL ALL THAT WAS LEFT WERE HIS EXCUSES...

Alexis de Tocqueville warned of in *Democracy in America*.

Tocqueville was referring to the comprehensive blandishments of the state that slowly drain from a citizenry the self-reliance and initiative self-government requires. With vivid charts and graphs and elegant prose, Eberstadt shows the rise of the entitlement state in the United States and the effects, moral and economic, it threatens to have on the country’s character. In the book’s closing pages, William Galston and Yuval Levin offer rebuttals and comments, crisply laying out the grand and overarching issue that separates our two political parties. *A Nation of Takers* is a must-read this election season—

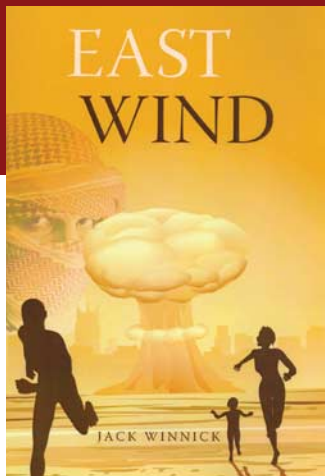
and, at 144 pages, a quick one to boot. Tocqueville would be impressed, and slightly alarmed. ♦

Don’t Speak

It’s exceedingly rare for the bureaucrats who hand out the cultural Nobel Prizes to get it right. Two years ago they did, awarding the peace prize to Liu Xiaobo, a dissident who’s been imprisoned in China since 2009 for urging direct elections and freedom of assembly.

They’ve made up for it this year, giving a Chinese writer of a very different sort the Nobel Prize for Literature. The selection might help sales of Scandinavian salmon—one of the

When terrorists threaten to blow up American cities...



...a crack counter-terrorist team is pitted against a group of Hezbollah-based operatives. An FBI agent teams up with a Mossad field agent in a desperate cross-country chase.



"In the genre of international spy thrillers from Daniel Silva and Vince Flynn, **Jack Winnick's *East Wind*** is a fast-paced, page-turner novel involving a credible scenario: Muslim terrorists have penetrated the

United States, detonated one small nuclear dirty bomb in a major U.S. city and are threatening further attacks if the U.S. does not cease its support for Israel."

-- **Lee Bender, Philadelphia Jewish Voice**

"A riveting thriller with real world connections, ***East Wind*** is a fine read, and highly recommended."

-- **Midwest Book Review**

"Only from an engineer with over 40 years of experience in nuclear and chemical engineering could an international terror plot thriller be so detailed and effective."

-- **Gerard Casale, Jr., Shofar Magazine**

East Wind is available at:

Firesidepubs.com | Kindle.com
Amazon.com | Nook.com
BN.com | Major bookstores

exports to suffer the wrath of Chinese officials over the award Liu couldn't collect—but does nothing for the Nobel's credibility.

Mo Yan's civic attitude is captured in his name: The pseudonym of 57-year-old Guan Moye means "don't speak." He explained to *Humanities* magazine last year: "[M]y father and mother told me not to speak outside. If you speak outside, and say what you think, you will get into trouble. So I listened to them and I did not speak."

His selective silence has served him well. Chinese officials honored Mo long before the Nobel committee did, though the prize sent them into ecstasies. "Mo Yan wins the Nobel Prize for Literature! This is the first Chinese writer who has won the Nobel Prize for Literature. Chinese writers have waited too long, the Chinese people have waited too long," said *People's Daily*, the Communist party organ. In fact, Goa Xingjian, exiled to France, won the 2000 literature prize.

Nonofficial China felt very differently. "Giving the award to a writer like this is an insult to humanity and to literature," declared visual artist and dissident Ai Weiwei. "You can never separate literature and struggle from today's current political situation. China is a state with no freedom of expression." Writer Mo Zhixu said that Mo Yan "doesn't have any independent personality."

Mo Yan is not just a card-carrying party member. He's vice chairman of the government's Chinese Writers' Association. Just last year, he contributed to a book celebrating the 70th anniversary of a speech Mao Zedong gave carefully delineating the subjects artists could treat. He's defended his masters in the international press, telling *Time* in 2010, "There are certain restrictions on writing in every country."

The criticism from colleagues—or is it better?—seems to have gotten to Mo Yan. He finally mentioned the jailed Liu, telling (state-run news) reporters, "I hope he can achieve his freedom as soon as possible." Strange wording. But Liu has already achieved more than the Gabriel García Márquez-knockoff Mo is ever likely to. ♦

the weekly
Standard

www.weeklystandard.com

William Kristol, *Editor*

Fred Barnes, *Executive Editor*

Richard Starr, *Deputy Editor*

Claudia Anderson, *Managing Editor*

Christopher Caldwell, Andrew Ferguson,
Victorino Matus, Lee Smith, *Senior Editors*

Philip Terzian, *Literary Editor*

Stephen F. Hayes, Mark Hemingway,
Matt Labash, Jonathan V. Last, *Senior Writers*

Jay Cost, John McCormack, *Staff Writers*

Daniel Halper, *Online Editor*

Kelly Jane Torrance, *Assistant Managing Editor*

Julianne Dudley, *Assistant Editor*

Michael Warren, *Reporter*

Ethan Epstein,

Kate Havard, Jim Swift,

Editorial Assistants

Philip Chalk, *Design Director*

Barbara Kytte, *Design Assistant*

Carolyn Wimmer, *Executive Assistant*

Max Boot, Joseph Bottum,

Tucker Carlson, Matthew Continetti,
Noemie Emery, Joseph Epstein, David Frum,

David Gelernter, Reuel Marc Gerecht,

Michael Goldfarb, Mary Katharine Ham,

Brit Hume, Frederick W. Kagan,

Robert Kagan, Charles Krauthammer,

Yuval Levin, Tod Lindberg,

Robert Messenger, P.J. O'Rourke,

John Podhoretz, Irwin M. Stelzer,

Contributing Editors

Terry Eastland, *Publisher*

Nicholas H.B. Swezey, *Advertising Director*

Catherine Lowe, *Digital Business Director*

Jim Rossi, *Audience Development Director*

Richard Trocchia, *Fulfillment Manager*

T. Barry Davis, Todd A. Miller,

Senior Advertising Managers

Kathy Schaffhauser, *Finance Director*

Taylor Morris, *Office Manager*

Andrew Kaumeier, *Advertising Operations Manager*

**Advertising inquiries:
202-293-4900**

The Weekly Standard (ISSN 1083-3013), a division of Clarity Media Group, is published weekly (except the first week in January, third week in April, second week in July, and fourth week in August) at 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington D.C. 20036. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 421203, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1203. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-283-2014. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders and changes of address to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 421203, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1203. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-386-597-4378 for subscription inquiries. American Express, Visa/MasterCard payments accepted. Cover price, \$4.95. Back issues, \$4.95 (includes postage and handling). Send letters to the editor to The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. For a copy of The Weekly Standard Privacy Policy, visit www.weeklystandard.com or write to Customer Service, The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington, D.C. 20036. Copyright 2012, Clarity Media Group. All rights reserved. No material in The Weekly Standard may be reprinted without permission of the copyright owner. The Weekly Standard is a registered trademark of Clarity Media Group.



Death Be Not Proud

On the WEEKLY STANDARD cruise to Bermuda in July, I received an unusual request. After dinner one evening, I was approached by Carrie Ann Stallings from Jackson, Mississippi. She was on the ship with her husband, Alan.

She had heard I'd be leaving the cruise early, flying to London, and joining Mitt Romney's trip to Israel and Poland. Maybe I'd mentioned my plans when I spoke to cruise participants. I don't recall. But Carrie Ann and Alan were interested in the fact I'd be going to Poland.

Their son, Alan III, had died in 2008 after a long battle with brain cancer. He was 11 years old. A curious and perceptive boy with a strong wanderlust, he had studied maps and loved geography. He knew exactly the places he wanted to visit, only couldn't after he became mysteriously ill when he was 5.

His father, Alan Jr., and Carrie Ann didn't forget his plans. To honor their son and ease their grief, they decided to spread his ashes in places young Alan had been eager to see in person. They'd already done this along the Douro River in Portugal, on a beach in Ireland, and in Italy, Bermuda, and the Atlantic Ocean. But not Poland.

Thus Carrie Ann's request: Would I take a container of Alan III's ashes and spread them on Polish soil? On WEEKLY STANDARD cruises, I'm usually asked about politics. This question took me by surprise. But how could I say no? Besides, I wasn't inclined to. I said yes, and within minutes, Carrie Ann had gone to her cabin and returned with the container.

I had one worry. It wasn't about finding an appropriate spot in Poland for a boy's ashes. It was about

airport security. Would the container in my luggage show up in X-rays or searches and raise questions? Might it be seized?

I'll get back to that, but first I'll tell you about Alan III, nicknamed "A3," and his parents. Discovering your child has cancer is among the worst nightmares for parents. But there's something even more cruel. Alan and Carrie Ann watched as their



Alan III with Herman

son suffered through more than six years of tests, faulty diagnoses, operations, radiation, and, perhaps worst of all, false hopes. Yet Alan III never complained. "He wasn't fearless," his father says, "but he was brave."

The first symptom appeared when he was playing soccer. His father noticed he didn't turn his head to follow the ball. He turned his whole body. Why? "It hurts to turn my head," he told his father.

That began Alan's odyssey as a patient. His father, an anesthesiologist, knew where to start. Alan III saw an orthopedic surgeon, a neurologist, and a rheumatism specialist.

He was put in traction for nearly a year. Then, in an MRI, a brain tumor was discovered. "The tumor was vanishingly rare," his father said, "probably much less than 100 worldwide per year."

The prognosis was grim. "Nobody wants to face the mortality rate on this," Alan Jr. said. Still, he was furious when a doctor within earshot said of patients with this kind of tumor, "They all die."

Alan III had two operations at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP), one lasting 11 hours, the other 18. The family went home to Jackson. When Alan III experienced weakness in a leg, he returned to Philly for a stem cell transplant, after which he seemed to be doing fine. There was hope for survival. But an MRI found a new tumor. And hope died.

I learned two special things about the boy. He missed most of the second grade and all of the third, but went back for the fourth and excelled. The Make a Wish people awarded him a trip anywhere he'd like to go. He couldn't speak. He wrote "Brazil." He was too sick to go.

The Stallings are now on the board of visitors for neuroscience at CHOP, raising money for research on tumors like their son's. "The key to this one seems to have Nobel Prize-magnitude spin-offs and . . . [may] provide a window for a cure for cancers that are much more prevalent," Alan Jr. says.

As for me, I had no trouble with airport security. When I got to Poland, I skipped Romney's session with Polish officials and wandered through the old city of Gdansk. I was looking for a church. I found one but no churchyard. Nearby there was a cool spot shaded by trees. I scratched a hole in the ground and dropped the ashes of Alan Stallings III in it. I said a prayer. My task was done.

FRED BARNES

Liberalism, Manic & Depressive

In the first presidential debate of 2012, we saw, up close and personal, what Harvey Mansfield called in last week's issue the ennui of Barack Obama. Obama's ennui is related to his dislike for the real challenges of governing. More fundamentally, his ennui reflects his declinism. What's exciting about governing for the next four years if it's just going to involve managing austerity at home and decline abroad? It's a depressing prospect.

Obama is depressed because today's liberalism is depressing. Obama is world-weary because modern liberalism is world-weary. Hope and change was just campaign talk. The real existing liberal president lives in an atmosphere of reduced hope and hostility to needed change. As Mansfield puts it, "Obama's air of ennui in the debate arises not just from his personal character of cool but more from his thoughts about the future. He sees America in decline. He does not say it, but he sees it, and it determines his politics as well as his demeanor."

In the vice presidential debate Thursday, we saw, up close and personal (too up close and personal), what we might charitably call the excitability of Joe Biden. If Obama is cool, Biden is hyper-caffeinated. But Obama's ennui and Biden's excitability are flip sides of the same liberal coin.

What gets Biden excited aren't any particular plans for the future. Biden spent almost no time in his debate explaining how things would get better in a second term of an Obama-Biden administration. Democratic spinners tried to explain Biden's maniacal smiles and smirks as evidence he's a happy warrior. But the spirit of Biden is altogether different from the truly happy warrior of the liberalism of another era, Hubert Humphrey. Humphrey bubbled over with enthusiasm for the future. Biden was agitated rather than enthusiastic, and his energy was entirely channeled into demagoguing a Romney-Ryan future. Nor

was there any Bobby Kennedy in Biden. Kennedy used to claim, "Some men see things as they are and say, 'Why?' I dream things that never were and say, 'Why not?'" Joe Biden didn't do a lot of dreaming Thursday night. He spent most of the debate arguing excitably against change at home and explaining exasperatedly why we can't accomplish anything abroad.

The dreams of liberalism's fathers don't move today's liberals. Whether in manic or depressed mode, they know

liberalism's been mugged by reality—though they dare not acknowledge it. Has Obama's 2009 Cairo speech been overtaken, to say the least, by facts on the ground in 2012 in Benghazi? Don't acknowledge the facts. Does all the talk about a green energy future seem empty and ridiculous? Keep talking the talk—while also taking credit for increases in oil and gas production you did nothing to make possible and that

you, deep down, find distasteful. Is there a need for real tax reform? Ignore it, and just let the Bush tax cuts expire. Do decades-old programs like Social Security and Medicare need to be changed? Just attack the reforms Romney and Ryan have proposed. *Roe v. Wade*? Sacred scripture.

To watch Obama and Biden on stage is to watch a liberalism that has lost its nerve, a liberalism that is the enervated and excitable residue of an earlier, energetic doctrine. Mansfield saw it coming over three decades ago: "From having been the aggressive doctrine of vigorous, spirited men, liberalism has become hardly more than a trembling in the presence of illiberalism. . . . Who today is called a liberal for strength and confidence in defense of liberty?"

But a decadent liberalism can do real and lasting damage. The United States can survive—the United States has survived—four years of weakness and drift. Four more years would be another matter. Obamacare institutionalized, defeat in Afghanistan, the Middle East in chaos, a



Supreme Court unmoored from the Constitution—these would be the wages of four more years of Obama and Biden. The historic task of Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan is to bring home to Americans just how much damage could be done by another four years of a decadent liberalism—and to make the case for a conservatism neither enervated by an acceptance of decline nor made excitable by a fear of change, a conservatism that shows strength and confidence in defense of liberty.

—William Kristol

Obama Didn't Save Us

About the only talking point Joe Biden didn't repeat in his debate with Paul Ryan was the one lionizing President Obama for having saved the country from another Great Depression. Biden used it in his speech at the Democratic convention, as did others, and it remains a hardy perennial of Obama lore. The president, ever immodest, has credited himself for this achievement. Last year Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner told him, it's "your legacy." Andrew Sullivan, in a recent *Newsweek* cover story likening Obama to Ronald Reagan, twice credited the president with having "prevented a second Great Depression."

This is the canard that never dies—despite the total absence of facts to back it up. What's surprising is that Republicans, conservatives, and the media have done so little to stash the Obama-as-savior claim in the attic of political untruths. Correcting that oversight is long overdue.

That the president saved us is an empty boast. The Obama camp cites the stimulus package enacted in February 2009 as evidence for the claim. But on inspection, this proof dissolves. The stimulus wasn't responsible even for halting the recession, much less keeping America out of a depression. The recession officially ended in June 2009—at a time when only a fraction of the \$831 billion in stimulus funds had been spent.

Besides, had we been on the brink of a Great Depression in 2009, the stimulus wouldn't have been big enough to stop it. Ed Lazear, who headed George W. Bush's council of economic advisers, has produced the relevant numbers. The gross domestic product (GDP) shrank 12 percent during the 2007-2009 recession. "The largest estimates of the effect of the Obama stimulus is about 3.5 percent," Lazear says. "The Great Depression was a 40 percent 'recession.'" The math disproves the Obama claim.

So does the course of the economy in 2008. James Pethoukis, the American Enterprise Institute economics

columnist, has noted that the drop in GDP ended in December. "The big break in the decline happened before the stimulus was passed," he says. Indeed, it occurred before Obama had taken office. If there was a threat of a depression, it was gone. Unemployment continued to grow for a few months, but it's a lagging indicator.

Two more points. "Economists weren't predicting a Depression," according to John Merline of *Investor's Business Daily*. Obama's economists, surveying the economy as he entered the White House, didn't see any indication of one. Nor did the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), which predicted the recession would end in the second half of 2009. Former CBO director Douglas Holtz-Eakin reminds us that any administration would have proposed an economic stimulus, given conditions in early 2009. Obama's program wasn't unique, except in its failure to spark a strong recovery.

If anyone is responsible for averting a financial disaster, it's the much-maligned chairman of the Federal Reserve, Ben Bernanke. A Princeton economist, he's a student of the Depression and an expert in the role of monetary policy. He acted early and often to prevent a catastrophic collapse, with remarkable success.

After Bear Stearns, the global investment bank and brokerage firm, collapsed in March 2008, Bernanke opened the Fed's discount window—with its cheap loans—to non-commercial banks like Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley. Then, after Lehman Brothers, the financial services firm, went under in September 2008, Bernanke was instrumental in creating the \$700 billion Troubled Assets Relief Program (TARP) that kept the big banks alive.

That wasn't all. Bernanke had learned the lessons of the Depression. In the early 1930s, the Fed tightened the money supply. Bernanke understood the Fed should have done the opposite. So in December 2008, a full month before Obama was inaugurated, the Bernanke Fed cut interest rates to near zero. How has Bernanke been rewarded for his foresight? Obama claims all the credit for himself for saving the economy.

It gets worse. Because the economic recovery is so sickly, Bernanke has been forced to step in again, this time to rescue Obama from his wrongheaded policies. To stave off a new recession, he has eased monetary policy three times—QE1, QE2, QE3—by buying trillions in government-held mortgages and bonds, at the risk of higher inflation.

The task for Obama was to create conditions conducive to a sharp snap-back from the recession. He hasn't done this. Bernanke's job was to stop the economic free-fall in 2008. He did that. There was never a serious threat of another Great Depression. But assuming a small threat existed, Bernanke snuffed it out.

"That was Bernanke's crowning achievement," says Washington consultant David Smick, "for which he'll be remembered with enormous praise by historians." Obama? He should get the credit he deserves: none.

—Fred Barnes

The Benghazi Scandal

Danville, Ky.

Three hours before the vice presidential debate here on October 11, Stephanie Cutter, a top spokesman and deputy campaign manager for Barack Obama, previewed Joe Biden's explanation for the administration's ever-changing narrative on the deadly 9/11 attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya. In short: The intelligence made us do it. The reason administration officials repeatedly told the country a story that was untrue—in virtually all its particulars—is that they got bad information from the intelligence community. Or so they say.

At the debate, moderator Martha Raddatz noted “there were no protesters” that day in Libya, and asked Biden why the administration's talk of protests “went on for weeks.”

Biden answered directly: “Because that's exactly what we were told by the intelligence community. The intelligence community told us that. As they learned more facts about exactly what happened, they changed their assessment.”

Cutter pointed to a September 28 statement from Shawn Turner, a spokesman for the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI). “Take a look at the director of national intelligence's statement, which you may disagree with, but you can't accuse them of playing politics,” Cutter told Fox News anchor Bret Baier. “His statement, two weeks after the attack, said that there was an original conclusion that people were taking advantage of protests surrounding that [anti-Muslim] video to attack the embassy. We then learned weeks later that it was a deliberate, premeditated attack by terrorists.”

First, it's worth noting that the statement did not come from Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, as Cutter claimed. It came from a spokesman. This isn't a trivial distinction. Much thought is put into whose name goes on statements like this. Why wasn't it Clapper's?

Second, Cutter's timeline and the ODNI statement are not consistent. Cutter claims the White House learned the truth about the attacks “weeks later.” The statement from the ODNI spokesman says only that the earliest assessment, “in the immediate aftermath,” turned out to be wrong. The statement reads, in relevant part: “In the immediate after-

math, there was information that led us to assess that the attack began spontaneously following protests earlier that day at our embassy in Cairo. . . . As we learned more about the attack, we revised our initial assessment to reflect new information indicating it was a deliberate and organized terrorist attack carried out by extremists.”

The obvious question: When did the intelligence community tell the White House (and other policymakers) that the assault on the compound was a premeditated terrorist attack conducted by al Qaeda-linked jihadists? Was it really *weeks later* as both Biden and Cutter claim?

It was not. Two U.S. officials familiar with the reporting on the Benghazi attack tell THE WEEKLY STANDARD that revisions to the initial reports came within days—sometimes within hours. Intelligence products published on September 12, sources tell us, included detailed evidence that al Qaeda-linked jihadists were involved in the Benghazi attacks.

* As first reported by *Newsweek's* Eli Lake, within hours of the attack, “U.S. intelligence agencies monitored communications from jihadists affiliated with the group that led the attack and members of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the group's North African affiliate.” Lake reported that the intelligence was so detailed, U.S. officials “had even pinpointed the location of one of those attackers.”

* Senior State Department officials were in contact with security agents on the ground in Benghazi,



Jihadists did this.

in real time, as the attacks unfolded. In conversations that evening and the next day U.S. officials in Libya gave no indication that there had been any protest of any kind.

* On September 12, the *New York Times* reported: “American and European officials said that while many details about the attack remained unclear, the assailants seemed organized, well trained and heavily armed, and they appeared to have at least some level of advance planning.”

* That same day, Representative Mike Rogers, chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, said he had no doubt the attacks were planned. “It was a coordinated, military-style, commando-type raid.”

* Democrats said the same thing. Representative Adam Smith, a member of the House Armed Services Committee, said: “This was not just a mob that got out of hand. Mobs don't come in and attack, guns blazing. I think that there is a growing consensus it was preplanned.”

* Senator Carl Levin, leaving a briefing with Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, was asked if the attack was planned: “There's been evidence of that. . . . The attack looked like it was planned and premeditated, sure.”

* On September 14, a U.S. official told Reuters that while the question of planning was an open one, “Every-

NEWS.COM

thing I have seen says this was a highly armed, organized attack. Not a mob reacting to a movie.”

The officials who gave these assessments—elected and unelected, Democrat and Republican—were in a position to do so for one reason: the intelligence. Most important: There is no intelligence whatsoever linking the Benghazi attack to the anti-Muslim video.

Notice that all of those assessments came *before* U.N. ambassador Susan Rice appeared on five political talk shows September 16 and linked the Libya attack to the video. And they came well before Barack Obama appeared on David Letterman on September 18 and did the same.

OBAMA: You had a video that was released by somebody who lives here, a sort of shadowy character who is extremely offensive video directed at Muhammad and Islam.

DAVID LETTERMAN: Making fun of the Prophet Muhammad.

OBAMA: Making fun of the Prophet Muhammad. And, so, this caused great offense. In much of the Muslim world. But, what also happened was extremists and terrorists used this as an excuse to attack a variety of our embassies, including the consulate in Libya.

There are two possibilities. Either the intelligence community had a detailed picture of what happened in Benghazi that night and failed to share it with other administration officials and the White House. Or the intelligence community provided that detailed intelligence picture to others in

the administration, and Obama, Biden, Clinton, Susan Rice, and others ignored and manipulated the intelligence to tell a politically convenient—but highly inaccurate—story.

If it's the former, DNI James Clapper should be fired. If it's the latter, what happened in Benghazi—and what happened afterwards—will go down as one of the worst scandals in recent memory.

It seems far more likely that it's the latter. After all, is it conceivable that White House officials at the highest levels were not actively engaged in interagency meetings to determine what happened in Benghazi? Is it conceivable that intelligence officials, knowing there was no evidence at all of a link between the film and Benghazi, would fail to tell the president and his colleagues that their claims were unfounded? Is it conceivable that somehow the latest intelligence on the 9/11 attacks was left out of Obama's intelligence briefings in the days after 9/11? It would have been a priority for every professional at the CIA, the State Department, and the National Security Council to discover exactly what happened in Benghazi as soon as possible. Is it conceivable that the information wasn't passed to the most senior figures in the administration?

No, it's really not. And therefore, the fact that these senior figures misled us—and still mislead us—is a scandal of the first order.

—Stephen F. Hayes

A Victory ... and a Lesson

By Thomas J. Donohue
President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

This year we've focused a lot on what's ahead—among other things, November's high-stakes election and the looming fiscal cliff in January. We won't let up on the political pressure leading up to Election Day. And we're going to keep pushing for a resolution to the fiscal cliff, followed by a big deal to address long-term fiscal challenges. But it's worth taking a moment to look back at a hard-fought victory on a transportation bill earlier this year.

After nine stopgap measures—and just hours before a short-term extension would have lapsed and cost thousands of Americans their jobs—Congress passed and the president signed a bipartisan two-year bill to reauthorize highway, transit, and safety programs and funding. While we would have preferred a longer-term bill with greater funding, this was a major step in the right direction.

The final bill, MAP-21, contained

a number of reforms long supported and fought for by the U.S. Chamber. It consolidates overlapping and duplicative federal programs. It streamlines the project delivery process to save limited taxpayer dollars. It gives states flexibility to target federal funds where they are needed most. And it expands opportunities for public-private partnerships and private investment.

Now, state and local governments can get projects moving again. Contractors and construction companies can start hiring again. And thousands of Americans can get back to work rebuilding our crumbling highways and bridges and restoring our economic competitiveness.

But big challenges remain: reducing waste while speeding projects; sharply boosting private investment in public infrastructure; and devising a predictable, sustainable, and growing source of dedicated, user fee-based funding to ensure that the federal government is still a partner in supporting interstate commerce and international competitiveness.

By looking back at the transportation bill victory and keeping ongoing infrastructure needs in mind, lawmakers should be reminded that there is real work to be done in Congress. It's almost impossible for us to focus on it when we're consumed by self-inflicted crises, such as the fiscal cliff. And it's hard for us to make long-term investments in areas where the government does play a role, like maintaining a competitive national infrastructure system, when our budgets are consumed by unsustainable entitlement spending.

We should also remember that we can get hard things done when we roll up our sleeves, meet at the negotiating table, and set our minds to doing what's right for our country and our economy. Let's take that lesson and apply it to the significant challenges that lie ahead.



100 Years Standing Up for American Enterprise
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Staggering Idiocy

Panicky progressives struggle for reasons to support Obama.

BY ANDREW FERGUSON



A website called 90days90reasons.com went online this summer, after the writer Dave Eggers got worried about the diminishing enthusiasm for Barack Obama among people like him. Eggers is a hipster, I guess you'd call him. He lives in San Francisco. He's best known as the author of *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*, a long, funny, clever, and annoying memoir, which was published, like Barack Obama's less funny

Andrew Ferguson is a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

and less annoying memoir, when its author was scarcely pushing 30. Kids grow up so quickly these days. The memoir's immense commercial success, along with the popularity of a magazine he edits, led the *New York Times* to call Eggers "the magnetic center of a literary counterestablishment."

Normally when the *Times* calls a fellow a magnetic center of a counterestablishment, you'll find him cuddling snozily in the lap of the *Times* or some other establishment enterprise, a plump purring pussycat, defanged and declawed. Even so, on Eggers's

pro-Obama website, glimmers of independent thinking flash here and there. For one thing, several contributors aren't very pro-Obama.

"Has he failed?" asks one, who lives in New York. "Sure he has."

"There's no whitewashing the fact that his presidency hasn't been a green one," writes another, who also lives in New York.

Still another, an Indian, who lives in Seattle, writes: "I tried to think of one great thing Obama has done for Indians. And I couldn't think of one damn thing."

Eggers himself acknowledged the problem in the website's manifesto, called "The Opening Salvo." The ambivalence among "progressives" is what drove him to start the website in August.

"We are three months away from the presidential election," he wrote, "and there is a stunning lack of energy displayed by likely Obama voters." His solution: Each day, for the 90 days before the election, a different contributor—a writer, a singer, an artist, an activist, all members in good standing of the counterestablishment—would write an essay offering a pithy reason why Obama should be reelected. "Obama cares about women's health." "Obama repealed Don't Ask Don't Tell." "President Obama Supports Women's Right to Choose." "Obama is on the right side of land use and transportation policy." Some reasons are pithier than others.

The essays themselves show all the magic of political discourse in the Internet age—the freewheeling energy, the unconventional lines of argument, the damn-the-torpedoes prose—which is another way of saying that Eggers really needs to hire a copy editor. Some sentences you can read several times without success. "Millions of progressive Americans," Eggers writes, "are now behaving as if, because Obama hasn't addressed their particular pet issue, that the best way to express their dissatisfaction is to allow Mitt Romney to become president."

"Corporations," notes the writer John Sayles (Dutchess County, New York) in Reason 49, "have been

GARY LOCKE

anointed responsibility by the Supreme Court as both eligible of public subsidy and free of, and, like all large and unrestrained creatures, act only in their own self-interest.”

Typos abound, along with grammatical mistakes, but grammar and punctuation et cetera et cetera are far less important than the proper phraseology. A Reasoner will never call himself a liberal, for example, if he can use progressive instead. Keeping up with the lingo is an important signal that progressives send to one another to certify their own progressivity. That’s why global warming is now climate change; using the former in place of the latter proves you’re a laggard. On 90reasons, the right to an abortion is now women’s health, and gay marriage is now marriage equality, just as Indians who became Native Americans a generation ago are now most often just Indians again. Keeps you on your toes.

Gay marriage—wait!—marriage equality was the first reason cited on the website’s first day by the first Reasoner, a man named Ben Gibbard, who is identified as the lead singer of a band called Death Cab for Cutie. He’s from Seattle. Four long days would pass on the website, four more reasons would be offered, before the right of gays to marry each other was again cited by a Reasoner as a reason to vote for Obama. Marriage equality came up again a week later, in an essay by an actor from New York, and then the next day too, by a songwriter in New York, and then four days later, by a Reasoner from Brooklyn, and so on, at irregular but very brief intervals. As I write, however, it’s been more than 10 days since a Reasoner mentioned marriage equality. I don’t know what’s going on.

Reading the posts from all these writers and artists over the last two months has reminded me of the chasm that separates the talent for creative work from the talent for making a whole lot of sense, rationality-wise. “I have noticed something in Mitt Romney’s name, which I think speaks to what he is about,” writes the movie director David Lynch (Los Angeles) in Reason 52. “If you just rearrange a few letters, Romney becomes R MONEY. I

believe Mitt Romney wants to get his mitts on R Money.”

A musician and surfer named Jack Johnson (Oahu) says: “I’ve met President Obama twice, and both times he gave me a hug, not a handshake.” This is Reason 55, and Johnson knows his line of argument is shaky: “Maybe that’s not a good enough reason to vote for him but it sure makes me trust him more.”

The hug logic works for Jim James, who came all the way from Louisville one time to play music at a White House function and got to wait in a reception line to meet the Obamas. “When I reached the end, the pomp and circumstance seemed to fall away, and there were two real people there, real people who reached out, gave me a big hug, and said thanks for coming,” he argues. “They were REAL. Somehow in those three minutes they made me feel at ease and conveyed the truth of the human experience: that no one is any better or worse than anyone else.”

The truth of the human experience turns out not to include Republicans, however, for in the next paragraph James notes that George W. Bush is an “evil robot” who did not “have a real relationship with his wife.” Robotics is a common theme among the Reasoners, particularly as it applies to Mitt Romney. According to David Cross (New York City), Romney is “a craven, out-of-touch capitalist robot.” Reggie Watts, who’s a musician (Brooklyn), reasons that we should vote for Obama because “he’s not a robot, like Romney is.” Also, “He’s not an asshole.”

Yes, I know: Our counterestablishment suffers from a bad case of potty mouth. The bassist for the Foo Fighters (Los Angeles) says that corporations are “assholes.” Judd Apatow (Los Angeles) worries that his young daughters, when they grow up to leave home and get jobs, will not receive “equal pay for equal work.”

“If this was the case,” he says, “it would be f—d.” He adds: “I don’t think I can think of a better word,” and I believe him. Apatow writes screenplays for a living.

But he has a serious point to make! President Obama, he notes, deserves

reelection because he “created the White House Council on Women and Girls,” which will go some way to solving the “equal pay for equal work” thing. Here Apatow employs another line of argument that has sadly become common to the Reasoners. An urban planner (Los Angeles, which must be an awful place to be an urban planner) wants to reelect the president in part because he began the federal government’s Partnership for Sustainable Communities. A man who has a son with autistic children (San Francisco) will vote for Obama because he has created “programs” for autistic children—a “shit-ton” of these, he says.

For the counterestablishmentarians, “program” and “funding” are words with talismanic power. President Obama will “fund programs” or “not cut programs” that will rescue the environment or curb domestic violence or teach civility or help the disabled or train the jobless. The proper program can do everything but play canasta. And it can be advocated without wondering how it might work or whether it would work or what other programs would not be funded so it could be.

As they’ve piled up on the website the last couple months, I’ve found this kind of Reason oddly dispiriting, precisely because it’s so conventional—it’s the kind of thing you might even hear from a Republican. From a counterestablishment, I expect more reasoning like Jamaica Kincaid’s (Vermont). “I am a woman,” she writes. “From the time I was 14 years of age until I was 57 years of age, every twenty-eight days or so, I had a menstrual period.” She concludes, after several long paragraphs of logic-chopping, that Obama’s “simple, firm, clear support for a woman’s right to choose . . . is what makes me committed to his reelection.” QED.

But such arguments are increasingly the exception on 90days90reasons.com. What a strangely conventional thing Eggers’s hipster counterestablishment turns out to be! Why, in my day, sonny, a lead singer for a band with a name like Death Cab for Cutie wouldn’t be caught dead endorsing a Democrat, especially one who’s busy convincing the country of his pragmatism

and moderation. Counterestablishments simply lived outside categories like right and left and Democrat and Republican. And they were never suckered by White House commissions and federal initiatives.

No longer, apparently. Whether the counterestablishment has taken over the Democratic party or the Democratic party has overtaken the counterestablishment, I don't know. But it's clear they'll be very happy together. ♦

Big Bird Is Big Business

PBS's well-feathered nest.

BY JONATHAN V. LAST

The mini-storm over Mitt Romney, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and Big Bird pitted two visions of the show's finances against one another. Mitt Romney claimed he'd cut funding so that *Sesame Street* would have to air commercials. Big Bird defenders imagined a world in which a lack of federal money would put Big Bird out of business.

But both of these views are mystifying to anyone who has slogged through the aisles of Toys "R" Us, Kroger, or Target, where *Sesame Street* characters stare down at you aisle after aisle. The entire political debate seems designed to ignore the central question: Just how much money does *Sesame Street* make from licensing its franchise?

The answer is both more, and less, than you might imagine.

When *Sesame Street* first aired in 1969, it was a public-private partnership. About a year earlier, a group of private foundations put together grants along with some funding from the federal government to create a production company called the Children's

Television Workshop. The CTW was given \$8 million in seed money to create a single new show. What they came up with was *Sesame Street*.

In 1981, the federal government pulled its funding from the CTW because it was pretty obvious that Big Bird was big enough that he no longer needed taxpayer dollars. (It crept back in the form of government grants and a small portion of funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.) The Children's Television Workshop had created not just an immensely popular program, but a mountain of intellectual property that could be profitably mined for decades. Which is exactly what they did.

The licensing opportunities came in two forms. First, there was the traditional world of product licenses. Characters such as Big Bird, Oscar the Grouch, and Cookie Monster began appearing on everything from greeting cards to toothbrushes. By 1984, *Forbes* estimated that the characters were appearing on 1,700 products doing \$200 million worth of business just at the wholesale level. And that was the last year before things really took off. Because in 1985 the show introduced

Elmo, who quickly became its flagship character and most bankable property.

The licensing regime only grew from there. In 1990 CTW licensed their franchise to a company building *Sesame Street* Store retail shops. There were *Sesame Street* videogames, sheets, towels, soap dishes, bracelets, vitamins, shoes, and every other flavor of merchandise imaginable. And none of that includes the toys.

By 1981, *Sesame Street* had entered the toy realm with licensing agreements with Fisher-Price, Mattel, and others. (People in the industry still talk about the Christmas of 1996, when the "Tickle Me Elmo" doll became a national sensation.) But in 2009 they switched partners and signed an exclusive contract with Hasbro. No one knows exactly what the terms of the new deal were, but Mattel's CFO told reporters that what his company had been giving Sesame Workshop (as the CTW had rebranded itself) was one of the top 10 such arrangements in the toy business.

It's a sign of how seriously the company takes its licensing programs that the woman it hired as vice president of licensing in 2011 was recruited from IBM, where she ran Big Blue's brand advertising operation.

Over the years, Sesame Workshop has tried to present its licensing partnerships as contributing to its non-profit mission. Thus, when Sesame Workshop signed deals with Del Monte and Sunkist, they emphasized that their *Sesame Street*-branded products would be healthy snacks for kids. When they sold the rights to their characters to Procter & Gamble for use on Pampers-brand disposable diapers, they couched the move as part of their efforts to promote "reliable quality products for children and the families who care for them."

But that's been a hard line to hold. In addition to the Sesame Place theme park north of Philadelphia and the Sesame Street Forest section of Busch Gardens, it's estimated that roughly 100,000 products have borne the *Sesame Street* imprimatur over the last 40 years.

Which brings us to the company's



Pony up, kids.

Jonathan V. Last is a senior writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

AP / FISHER-PRICE

second form of licensing: the show itself. Today *Sesame Street* airs in something like 140 countries (the exact count is always shifting). In most places, Sesame Workshop sells to TV stations an edited, dubbed version of the show. But in two dozen or so countries, Sesame Workshop has licensed the rights to the property so that producing partners can co-create their own versions of *Sesame Street*. So, for instance, in Germany there's *Sesamstrasse* while in India there's *Galli Galli Sim Sim*.

As Vincent Vega would say, the difference between the American *Sesame Street* and its foreign incarnations is in the little things. In France's *5, Rue Sésame*, there's no Big Bird character. In South Africa's *Takalani Sesame*, one of the puppets has HIV.

But the purpose of all of these international versions is the same: to bring the educational and social power of America's premiere preschool television program to children across the globe. It should be noted that these international franchises also result in licensing revenues from the foreign TV partners and—coincidentally—a multiplying of the consumer audience for other *Sesame Street*-licensed products. In the year following the debut of the Japanese homegrown version of the show, Sesame Workshop product-license revenue jumped 4 percent, largely from growth in Japan.

The bottom-line: In 2011 Sesame Workshop took in \$46.9 million in licensing income from *Sesame Street*. That doesn't seem like much, given the breadth of its river of royalty money. But keep in mind two things: First, Sesame Workshop is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, and since they're tax-exempt they have to be careful about how much money they make. It seems pretty likely that if they were a for-profit enterprise, they could *really* be raking it in. Second, they don't really need all that much money. The American version of the show costs about \$17 million a year to produce (a full season consists of 26 episodes). Even if a President Romney cut the cord entirely, there's no reason Big Bird would need, as he

has suggested, to run commercials.

So why do liberals think *Sesame Street* is in critical need of taxpayer support? Because *Sesame Street's* production company, Sesame Workshop, has an annual budget of \$133 million. The company employs 1,320 people and produces not just *Sesame Street*, but a host of other series—and other products—too. When you look at the budget, Sesame Workshop spends \$37 million researching and producing all of its TV shows, foreign and domestic, \$41 million producing “non-TV

content,” and roughly \$7 million on “Muppet acquisition.”

So does Big Bird need federal money? In their own way, the left and right are both correct. *Sesame Street* can get along easily without government funding. The Sesame Workshop—an entity that has grown inexorably since its founding and now encompasses items that have nothing to do with its original mission—cannot.

It's fitting that the liberal view of *Sesame Street* mirrors the liberal view of the federal government itself. ♦

Confusion or Coverup?

What we knew about the Benghazi attack and when we knew it. BY THOMAS JOSCELYN

On September 11, 2012, the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya, was assaulted by dozens of terrorists. U.S. ambassador John Christopher Stevens and three other Americans were killed. The attack followed an al Qaeda-inspired protest in front of the U.S. embassy in Cairo that same day. And in the days that followed, other U.S. embassies were stormed.

Throughout those challenging days and the weeks that followed, the Obama administration struggled to explain to Americans what had occurred. It took weeks for the administration to disavow the phony storyline it adopted early on. Administration officials maintained that the terrorist attack in Benghazi was the result of a “spontaneous” protest that spun out of control. The protesters supposedly objected to an anti-Islam film titled *The Innocence of Muslims*.

But there never was any protest in Benghazi. The consulate was simply

attacked by terrorists, almost certainly al Qaeda-affiliated groups, on the eleventh anniversary of the most devastating al Qaeda attack in history.

The Obama administration, notably the president himself, was slow to publicly acknowledge al Qaeda's hand in these events. It is not clear even at this writing if President Obama has yet mentioned “al Qaeda” or affiliated groups in this context. The president has found time to repeat one of his favorite campaign mantras: “Al Qaeda is on the path to defeat and Osama bin Laden is dead.” But when it comes to the events in Benghazi, the president has offered an inconsistent and misleading narrative.

A timeline of events is set forth below. The events highlighted show that al Qaeda's growing presence inside Libya was recognized by the U.S. government prior to the events of September 11, 2012. The day before the attack in Benghazi, al Qaeda emir Ayman al Zawahiri called on jihadists to avenge the drone killing in June of a top al Qaeda operative who hailed from Libya. Other al Qaeda-linked

Thomas Joscelyn is a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

individuals were involved in the assaults on U.S. embassies elsewhere. While it is understandable that the U.S. government would seek to distance itself from a piece of anti-Muslim propaganda, the film repeatedly cited played only an ancillary role in these events.

August – An unclassified report published by the federal research division of the Library of Congress under an agreement with the Defense Department highlights the growing threat of Al Qaeda in Libya. The report (“Al Qaeda in Libya: A Profile”) says that al Qaeda’s senior leadership in Pakistan has dispatched operatives to Libya. Al Qaeda is on the verge of a fully “operational network,” according to the report, and al Qaeda-affiliated militias have acquired extensive weaponry and established training camps. The report notes that al Qaeda operatives inside Libya are also working with Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

September 9, Egypt – Clips of *The Innocence of Muslims* are shown on Egyptian television.

September 10 – Al Qaeda emir Ayman al Zawahiri releases through jihadist websites a video eulogy for slain al Qaeda leader Abu Yahya al Libi and says that his organization and its ideology are alive. Zawahiri says that Libi’s “blood is calling, urging and inciting you to fight and kill the crusaders.” Ayman al Zawahiri uses the video to boast that al Qaeda has not been defeated, but its “message has spread amongst our Muslim Ummah, which received it with acceptance and responded to it.” A clip of Mohammed al Zawahiri, Ayman’s brother (who told CNN earlier this year that al Qaeda’s strength is “not in its leaders but in its ideology”) is included in the video.

September 11, Cairo, Egypt (early morning) – The U.S. embassy issues a statement indirectly denouncing *The Innocence of Muslims*. According to the *Washington Post*, the embassy condemns efforts made by “misguided individuals to hurt the religious feelings of Muslims—as we condemn efforts to offend believers of all

religions.” Parts of the statement are also released via Twitter.

September 11, Cairo (morning) – A large crowd carrying numerous al Qaeda flags protests outside the U.S. embassy. Protesters scale the embassy’s wall, raise the flag commonly used by Al Qaeda in Iraq, and burn the Stars and Stripes. The protesters chant in Arabic: “Obama! Obama! We are all Osama!” A similar refrain is spray-painted on walls near the embassy. Mohammed al Zawahiri is interviewed by a jihadist propaganda outlet in front of the embassy. He admits to CNN he helped stage the protest.

September 11, Benghazi, Libya (about 2:30 P.M. EDT) – Ambassador



The U.S. compound in Benghazi, Sept. 11

Stevens walks his guests out of the compound and onto the street. There is no sign of a protest.

September 11, Benghazi (beginning around 3:40 P.M. EDT) – The terrorist attack on the Benghazi consulate begins. It lasts hours. The terrorists use AK-47s and rocket-propelled grenades in a complex assault on the compound. The assailants use diesel fuel to set the compound’s buildings ablaze.

September 11 (10:08 P.M. EDT) – Secretary of State Hillary Clinton releases a statement on the day’s events. “Our commitment to religious tolerance goes back to the very beginning of our nation. But let me be clear: There is never any justification for violent acts of this kind.”

September 12, Washington (10:43 A.M. EDT) – In the White House Rose Garden, President Obama addresses the nation concerning the attack in Benghazi. “We reject all efforts to

denigrate the religious beliefs of others,” he says. “But there is absolutely no justification to this type of senseless violence.” The president adds, “No acts of terror will ever shake the resolve of this great nation, alter that character, or eclipse the light of the values that we stand for.”

September 12 – The press is connecting the dots to al Qaeda. CNN’s Wolf Blitzer tells viewers that while it is “unclear right now . . . it sounds like that al Qaeda operation in Libya is very, very real indeed.” Blitzer continues: “All of this suggests to me . . . that the attack yesterday on the U.S. ambassador and other Americans on the 11th anniversary of 9/11 was not necessarily simply a coincidence.”

September 12, Washington (evening) – Under Secretary of State for Management Patrick F. Kennedy describes the events in Benghazi as a terrorist attack during a private briefing for House and Senate staffers, according to Fox News.

September 13, Sanaa, Yemen – The U.S. embassy is stormed after Sheikh Abdul Majid al Zindani calls for protests, according to the *New York Times*. Zindani is a known al Qaeda supporter who was designated an Osama bin Laden “loyalist” by the Treasury Department in 2004.

September 13, Washington (evening) – Secretary Clinton honors the end of Ramadan alongside Libyan ambassador Ali Aujali, who denounces the “terrorist attack” in Libya. Clinton refers to the attack as “the actions of a small and savage group” and again denounces the anti-Islam video. “Unfortunately, however, over the last 24 hours, we have also seen violence spread elsewhere,” Clinton says. “Some seek to justify this behavior as a response to inflammatory, despicable material posted on the Internet. As I said earlier today, the United States rejects both the content and the message of that video. The United States deplores any intentional effort to denigrate the religious beliefs of others.”

September 14, Tunis, Tunisia – The U.S. embassy is assaulted by a group called Ansar al Sharia Tunisia. That group is headed by a notorious

al Qaeda-linked terrorist named Seifallah ben Hassine, aka Abu Iyad al Tunisi. The embassy staff has already been evacuated, but Hassine's mob ransacks American property, including cars and a school. In 2000, Hassine cofounded the Tunisian Combatant Group (TCG). According to the United Nations, the TCG was created "in coordination with" al Qaeda. Hassine spent years in prison in Tunisia but was freed in 2011.

September 14, Andrews Air Force Base (2:46 P.M. EDT) – President Obama and Secretary Clinton attend the transfer of remains ceremony for Ambassador Stevens and the three other Americans killed in Benghazi. "This has been a difficult week for the State Department and for our country," Clinton says. "We've seen the heavy assault on our post in Benghazi that took the lives of those brave men. We've seen rage and violence directed at American embassies over an awful Internet video that we had nothing to do with. It is hard for the American people to make sense of that because it is senseless, and it is totally unacceptable." Clinton quotes from a letter written by the president of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, who condemned the attack as "an act of ugly terror."

September 14, Washington – "It was a terrorist attack, organized and carried out by terrorists," notably 15 members of "al Qaeda or radical Islamists," says Senator John McCain after a Senate Armed Services Committee meeting. "This was a calculated act of terror on the part of a small group of jihadists, not a mob that somehow attacked and sacked our embassy," McCain says. "People don't go to demonstrate and carry RPGs and automatic weapons."

September 16 (Sunday morning) – U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice goes on five Sunday talk shows to explain what happened in Benghazi. Her narrative is wrong in almost every detail. On CBS News's *Face the Nation*, for example, Rice says the attack was "sparked by this hateful video." She says that "spontaneous protest began outside of our consulate

in Benghazi . . . extremist elements, individuals, joined in that—in that effort with heavy weapons of the sort that are, unfortunately, readily now available in Libya post-revolution. And that it spun from there into something much, much more violent." Rice adds, "We do not . . . have information at present that leads us to conclude that this was premeditated or preplanned." Rice makes similar comments on the other four shows.

Libyan president Mohamed Yousef El-Magariaf also appears on *Face the Nation* and directly contradicts Rice's claims, saying that the attack was "planned—definitely" and that some of those arrested in connection with the attack are associated with al Qaeda.

September 17, Washington (1:57 P.M. EDT) – During a press briefing, State Department spokesperson Victoria Nuland is asked about Ambassador Rice's comments the day before. "I'd simply say that I don't have any information beyond what Ambassador Rice shared with you and that her assessment does reflect our initial assessment as a government," Nuland says. Asked if the attack in Benghazi was an act of terror, Nuland responds, "I'm not going to put labels on this until we have a complete investigation" and "I don't think we know enough."

September 18 (evening) – President Obama appears on *The Late Show with David Letterman*. "The ambassador to Libya killed in an attack on the consulate in Benghazi, is this an act of war, are we at war now? What happens here?" Letterman asks. President Obama responds: "No. Here's what happened. You had a video that was released by somebody who lives here, sort of a shadowy character who is extremely offensive [sic] video directed at Muhammad and Islam. . . . So this caused great offense in much of the Muslim world. But what also happened was extremists and terrorists used this as an excuse to attack a variety of our embassies, including the one, the consulate in Libya."

September 19, Washington – National Counterterrorism director Matthew Olsen labels the attack in Benghazi a "terrorist attack."

September 20, Washington – White House press secretary Jay Carney calls the attack in Benghazi terrorism for the first time.

September 20 – CBS News reports that "there was never an anti-American protest outside of the consulate" in Benghazi. Instead, according to witnesses, the consulate "came under planned attack." CBS News adds: "That is in direct contradiction to the administration's account of the incident."

September 20 – President Obama is asked about the attack in Libya and other embassy assaults during an appearance on Univision. "What we do know is that the natural protests that arose because of the outrage over the video were used as an excuse by the extremists to see if they could directly harm U.S. interests," President Obama says.

September 21 – "What happened in Benghazi was a terrorist attack, and we will not rest until we have tracked down and brought to justice the terrorists who murdered four Americans," Secretary Clinton says.

September 24 – President Obama appears on *The View*. When asked if it was a terrorist attack in Benghazi, Obama responds: "There's no doubt that the kind of weapons that were used, the ongoing assault, that it wasn't just a mob action. What's clear is that, around the world, there are still a lot of threats out there."

September 25, New York – Before the United Nations General Assembly, President Obama gives an impassioned defense of free speech, while denouncing *The Innocence of Muslims*. He attributes the events of "the last two weeks" to "a crude and disgusting video that sparked outrage throughout the Muslim world." The president continues: "Now, I have made it clear that the United States government had nothing to do with this video, and I believe its message must be rejected by all who respect our common humanity." The president mentions terrorism only in passing: "Al Qaeda has been weakened, and Osama bin Laden is no more." The president does not mention al Qaeda or affiliated groups or

terrorism in the context of the attack in Benghazi.

September 26, New York – At the U.N., Secretary Clinton publicly connects Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb to the attack in Benghazi, saying that AQIM members “are working with other violent extremists to undermine the democratic transitions underway in North Africa, as we tragically saw in Benghazi.” The *New York Times* reports that she is “the highest-ranking Obama administration official to publicly make the connection.”

September 27 – Defense Secretary Leon Panetta says the attack in Benghazi was an act of terror.

September 28 – The Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) releases a statement taking responsibility for attributing the attack in Benghazi to a spontaneous protest. The ODNI says that initially “there was information that led us to assess that the attack began spontaneously following protests earlier that day at our embassy in Cairo.” The ODNI “provided that initial assessment to Executive Branch officials and members of Congress, who used that information to discuss the attack publicly and provide updates as they became available.”

October 9, Washington – Two senior State Department officials brief the press on the attack in Benghazi, saying the assault was “unprecedented” and there was no protest beforehand. When asked what led the Obama administration to conclude that a protest precipitated the violence, one official responded: “That is a question that you would have to ask others. That was not our conclusion. I’m not saying that we had a conclusion, but we outlined what happened.” This directly contradicts earlier statements made by senior State Department officials.

October 10, Washington – Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Charlene Lamb testifies before the House Oversight Committee, “Dozens of attackers . . . launched a full-scale assault” on the Benghazi consulate “that was unprecedented in its size and intensity.” Lamb makes no mention of a protest. ♦

Who’ll Get Thrown Off the Island?

The greater East Asian co-hostility sphere.

BY ETHAN EPSTEIN

Relations between China and Japan, never particularly placid, have reached bona fide crisis proportions over the past several months—and could get worse.

The trouble began earlier this year, when Tokyo’s governor announced his intention to purchase the uninhabited and fiercely disputed Senkaku Islands (which the Chinese call the Diaoyu) from their private owner. This swiftly became Japanese national policy. And because in East Asia an uninhabited island is never just an uninhabited island, China had a national temper tantrum.

Riots broke out in dozens of Chinese cities, with tacit government approval. Scores of Japanese-owned businesses, factories, and cars were torched. A Japanese consulate was attacked. Protesters marched with banners calling for genocide, and businesses posted signs declaring, “No Japanese Allowed!” An editorial in the *People’s Daily*, the Chinese Communist party’s newspaper of record, lauded the rioters’ “patriotism.”

Economic damage was inflicted as well. Sales of Japanese cars in China (the world’s largest auto market and, it often seems, the world’s largest traffic jam) have tanked. “Toyota’s China sales plunged 49 percent last month compared to September 2011. Honda was off 41 percent and Nissan was down 35 percent,” reports *Bloomberg Businessweek*. Mazda and Mitsubishi sales also plummeted, with 35 percent and

65 percent declines, respectively. Air China, China Eastern Airlines, Japan Airlines, and All Nippon Airways have significantly reduced their flights between the two countries. And China’s finance minister and central bank chief snubbed a series of IMF meetings in Tokyo last week—though the gesture was wholly symbolic.

So, Sino-Japanese relations are approaching something of a postwar nadir. And there are reasons to believe the situation will only deteriorate further next year.

First, Japan must hold a general election by September, though it will likely happen much earlier. The main parties’ standard-bearers are scrambling furiously to out-hawk one another. The country’s woefully unpopular prime minister, Yoshihiko Noda, made waves by purchasing the Senkakus, and by pointedly vowing to accept “no compromises” with China. While these moves have won broad approval, his party will likely lose its majority in the Diet for a number of other reasons, including its economic performance.

A new party will contest the election. Founded and led by the boisterous Osaka mayor Toru Hashimoto, the Japan Restoration party is also making hawkish noises. Hashimoto, whom the *New York Times* describes as a “boyish-faced 43-year-old former television commentator” with an “in-your-face style,” is basically a Japanese Tea Partier. (A green tea partier?) He’s taken on Osaka’s public-sector unions, slashed deficits, and imposed



A protester in Tokyo

Ethan Epstein is an editorial assistant at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

performance standards on teachers. On foreign policy, he advocates an aggressive response to territorial disputes, and wants a national referendum on revising Article 9 of Japan's postwar constitution, which mandates pacifism. (Judging by recent polling, a major overhaul of Article 9 would stand a good chance of passing.)

But most important was September's selection of former prime minister Shinzo Abe to lead Japan's largest opposition party, the Liberal Democrats. (Their name is something of a misnomer—the Liberal Democrats aren't.) During his last premiership, from 2006 to 2007, Abe pursued an activist foreign policy. He warned of China's military buildup. He imposed tough sanctions on North Korea. He floated a plan to revise—or even do away with—Article 9.

Much of Abe's foreign policy record was (and is) tough, smart, and conservative. But Abe has an unfortunate habit of poking the eyes of Japan's allies; he's outraged South Korea by promoting school textbooks that ludicrously deny that Imperial Japan used "comfort women"—i.e., Korean sex slaves—before and during World War II.

Japan-watchers agree that Abe, the candidate likely to take the hardest line on China, is also most likely to win the premiership. Richard J. Samuels, the Ford International Professor of political science at MIT, says, "Abe has to be considered the favorite," and wonders if Abe will govern as the "nationalist who seems capable of reckless driving in the waters of the East China Sea." Ellis Krauss, professor of Japanese politics and policymaking at the University of California, San Diego, while averring that he "would take no Las Vegas odds as to what might happen," nonetheless concedes that right now, "Abe is the favorite."

China, meanwhile, will soon undergo its own leadership transition. Xi Jinping is set to be installed as president on November 8, replacing Hu Jintao. Hu's foreign policy has been notably more bellicose than his predecessors': In addition to its troubles with Japan, China is currently embroiled in territorial disputes with South Korea,

India, Vietnam, and (of course) Taiwan.

Not much is known about Xi's personal policy preferences, but at a September speech at an Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) meeting, he used what the *South China Morning Post* called a "tougher tone on . . . disputes," saying, "We are firm in safeguarding China's sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity." With the Chinese economy indisputably slowing, the new president and his party may find it strategic to inflame anti-Japanese nationalism further in order to deflect internal criticism from China's ever more restive populace.

Dean Cheng, a research fellow at the Heritage Foundation's Asian Studies Center, says it is likely that China's current foreign policy assertiveness

is not simply leadership posturing, but a combination of leadership weakness (it has no real direction in foreign policy); national arrogance (it's weathering the global economic downturn, enjoys rising comprehensive national power, has eclipsed Japan economically, etc.); and rising nationalism on the part of the populace. If this is correct, then the Chinese will continue to push their neighbors. Coupled with growing military capabilities, the Chinese may see themselves as ascendant in the region, and therefore conclude that they have little need to negotiate with smaller states, but will expect deference from them.

Dan Blumenthal, a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, predicts, "There will be a short period of caution as the new Chinese leadership finds its footing. But then they will need to do something in the East and South China Sea to show that they are not breaking from Hu Jintao's guidance and to consolidate support from the [Chinese military]."

Still, there are some who remain stubbornly optimistic that China's new president will forge a fresh, less combative course. Douglas H. Paal of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, for example, said that with the leadership changes, he hopes "there will be some adjustments and improvements, because there have been some rough patches in recent years." Henry Kissinger went further in a panel discussion last week at the Woodrow Wilson Center, saying, "I do not believe that great foreign adventures . . . can be on their agenda."

Then again, I happened to be in Beijing during the last leadership transition, when Hu Jintao became president. All the talk at that time had Hu going to lead a great liberalization of Chinese politics, loosening restrictions on the press and possibly even paving the way for democracy. We know how well that worked out. ♦

Back in the USSR?

Georgia elects an oligarch.

BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

Tbilisi
Citizens of Georgia did something bizarre a couple of weeks ago. Having fought a war against Russia in 2008 over the disputed territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, they turned around and chose

Christopher Caldwell is a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Bidzina Ivanishvili to serve as their prime minister. Ivanishvili had been one of the richest Russian oligarchs before returning to his native Georgia a few years ago. He will have to rule alongside his despised rival, President Mikheil Saakashvili—the democracy reformer who had promised to bring Georgia into both NATO and the EU and who convinced George W. Bush

and Nicolas Sarkozy to think of Georgia as a “beacon of freedom” between the Black and Caspian seas. Georgians do not yet agree with Vladimir Putin, who once urged that Saakashvili be “strung up by the balls.” But they have issued a lashing repudiation of Saakashvili’s United National Movement (UNM) and voted their country back into Russia’s sphere of influence.

Until Saakashvili, Georgia was a rough, tough place. Its best-known native sons include not only Stalin but also his secret police boss Lavrenti Beria. When Georgia’s longest-serving post-Soviet leader, Eduard Shevardnadze, tried to claim power in a rigged election in 2003, Saakashvili led hundreds of thousands into the streets, then into parliament, in what would be called the Rose Revolution. He sought to refound Georgia on different bases: democracy instead of autocracy and the West instead of Russia. He established what one Western ambassador last week called “about as forward-leaning a democracy as there is in the post-Soviet space.”

Saakashvili cleaned house. He preached tolerance for Armenians, Azerbaijanis, and gays. He built a new concert hall and a glitzy, glassy footbridge over the Kura River, and brought electricity to remote villages. He sent 800 troops to back NATO forces in Afghanistan—more than Belgium, and more than any non-NATO country except Australia. He passed a plan to move the parliament from Tbilisi to the western city of Kutaisi. He purged the old Soviet apparat, firing tens of thousands of police, including the notorious traffic squads who used to shake down people on the streets of the capital, Tbilisi. Deadwood would be one way of describing these guys. Bidzina Ivanishvili’s base would be another.

Ivanishvili thinks Georgia was freer under Shevardnadze than it is under Saakashvili. On the night before the elections, as part of a delegation sponsored by the German Marshall Fund of the United States, I met him at his Japanese-designed compound atop a steep hill overlooking Tbilisi. One

of my colleagues asked whether he thought Putin’s Russia was freer than Saakashvili’s Georgia. “When it comes to democracy Georgia has no better situation,” Ivanishvili said. “But when it comes to human freedom, the main value of democracy, things are much worse in Georgia.”

According to this year’s Forbes 400, Ivanishvili is worth \$6.4 billion—a bit less than Eric Schmidt of Google and a bit more than Silvio Berlusconi. He started getting rich importing primitive high-tech items from the West into Russia, and acquired the protection of the Yeltsin-era hardliner (and later



Ivanishvili: Democracy? Maybe, maybe not.

Yeltsin rival) Alexander Lebed. He wound up with his own bank, Rossiyskiy Kredit, which other oligarchs used. Ivanishvili is a bit like the Dan Snyder of Georgia. Much as the Washington Redskins’ owner has tried to use his billions to restore the team he remembers from his childhood, Ivanishvili is using his to rebuild the Georgia he grew up in. True, he spends money on his mammoth stainless-steel-and-glass home and on a collection of animals (penguins, zebras, flamingos) that he keeps in the west of the country. But he also shells out on weddings in his hometown of Chorvila, gilt for the new roof of the Tbilisi cathedral, big stipends for many of Tbilisi’s artists and intellectuals, and much besides.

Ivanishvili says that “trust from the people” was the main capital he brought to the election. But he has deployed the more traditional kind of capital just in case. At a rally in Kutaisi in early summer, his aides reportedly

distributed “Dream Cards,” inviting supporters to give their name and number and, while they’re at it, to list something they’d kind of like but couldn’t afford, as long as it didn’t go over a thousand lari (about \$600). Ivanishvili’s willingness to spend caught Saakashvili by surprise. Saakashvili had long used the Washington consultants Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, but Ivanishvili shelled out millions on Washington advisers (Patton Boggs) and pollsters (Penn Schoen Berland) and European advisers (including former U.S. ambassador to Germany John Kornblum, of Berlin-based Noerr) and pollsters. His campaign warned darkly of voter fraud and issued its own polls showing Ivanishvili winning by a three-to-one margin. Ivanishvili seemed to be setting the stage for a popular uprising should he lose.

And as recently as mid-September, an Ivanishvili loss seemed almost inevitable. Saakashvili’s party was up by 25 percent. But two weeks before the election, hidden-camera videos began to emerge of prisoners being tortured at the bottom of a stairwell in a Georgian jail. Taken by a guard who had fled to Belgium, they aired on the television channel Ivanishvili owned. These tapes, the authenticity of most of which the Saakashvili camp did not dispute, exposed as false the government’s claim to be moving Georgia into modernity. And that is how Ivanishvili’s triumphant supporters came to be waving the old-fashioned (1990s) Georgian flags in Freedom Square on October 1, while Ivanishvili’s albino son, Bera, whose rap songs have become popular among party supporters since his father’s run, hopped around on a makeshift stage.

The Saakashvili government had never looked quite so good at home as it did abroad. In 2005, after the minister of justice and minister of health flopped in TV debates, government officials stopped explaining their decisions to the public. In 2006, a young banker named Sandro Girgvliani, who had insulted some employees of the interior ministry in a bar, was found dead on the outskirts of Tbilisi the following morning. After months of

protests, observers discovered the government had obstructed the investigation. The government was way too eager to raze housing units and beloved landmarks to pay for increasingly vain development schemes. As Olga Allenova of the Russian paper *Kommersant* rightly summed it up: “The authorities got carried away with reforms and forgot about the people.”

An assertion heard at all levels of Georgian society was that Saakashvili’s government treated minorities and foreigners better than it treated natives. The French superstore Carrefour got better terms when opening a new outlet than did Georgian grocers—it added prestige, after all. The Saakashvili government, derided in some quarters as a creature of the Bush administration, wound up governing like the Obama administration, a coalition of new-class elites and special interests. It mopped up the vote last week in ethnic minority areas, which supporters attributed to the popularity of its progressivism and detractors to fraud. Ivanishvili, meanwhile, took huge majorities among the country’s Georgian Orthodox and solid majorities in Tbilisi.

We shouldn’t make the mistake of assuming that because Saakashvili was less democratic than he looked, Ivanishvili is more democratic. On the day after the election, before he had even been named prime minister, Ivanishvili called on Saakashvili to resign his post as president, a demand he later retracted. An op-ed in the *New York Times* recently chalked up Ivanishvili’s saber-rattling to his “bad political instincts.” But Ivanishvili made billions of dollars in Russia in the 1990s, a time when it required almost perfect political instincts to keep from getting whacked. We should assume Ivanishvili’s instincts are excellent until they’re proven otherwise. That is possibly why he has said he will not disturb Saakashvili’s goal of seeing Georgia in the EU and NATO, although his unwillingness to rule out a strategic partnership with Russia makes this an impossibility.

No matter how loudly he proclaimed his vision, Saakashvili had a weak hand from the get-go. There was always something utopian about

assuming Georgia could be wrenched out of the Russian orbit. Rather like Armenia, it is a lonely Christian country surrounded by Muslim ones in what is one of the most perennially violent parts of the world. Its great trump is that it has been closely allied with a massive Christian country to the north, which has traditionally been the biggest and most intimidating force in the region. Even in the wake of the Russo-Georgian war of 2008, there is pretty much zero anti-Russian feeling in Georgia. Most Georgians want more normal relations with Russia, which is the natural market for their wine, walnuts, canned goods, textiles, stone, and migrant labor. Ivanishvili says he hopes

to open trade relations in time to sell part of this year’s harvest.

And what did Saakashvili have to offer in return? First, an opening to NATO, an organization that demonstrated unambiguously in 2008 that it would not come to Georgia’s aid if Russia chose to challenge it. Western indifference to Georgia’s defense needs has deepened further in the Obama years. And, second, an opening to the EU, which since 2008 has looked more and more like a machine for dragging all member countries into debt and bankruptcy. A proud people might decline to sell its future to a billionaire if it has options. Clearly, Georgians were not satisfied that they did. ♦

Indiana vs. Obamacare

A conflict of visions.

BY CLAUDIA ANDERSON & WILLIAM ANDERSON

Indianapolis
There’s a collision brewing between Indiana and Washington over health care: whether our system will be a top-down affair of central planning, or whether it will leave any room for bottom-up arrangements that rely on dispersed, individual decision-making and resource-allocation by self-correcting consumer choice. The relevance to pending national decisions is obvious. Here’s how it began.

In 2006, at the instigation of a new governor, Indiana added a consumer-driven health plan (CDHP) to the benefit options offered to its 35,000 state employees. That first year, 4 percent of state workers chose it. This year, 94 percent did.

Claudia Anderson is managing editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD. William Anderson, a retired physician, teaches at Harvard University.

Then in 2008, the state again used a consumer-driven model to create an affordable health plan for low-income Hoosiers not eligible for Medicaid. To date, this Healthy Indiana Plan (HIP) has served over 98,000 people. Of users surveyed, 94 percent said they were satisfied with the program, and 99 percent would reenroll, according to the governor’s office.

The idea behind consumer-driven health plans is that people are careful shoppers when paying for services piecemeal but tend to overuse what seems to be free—think of an open buffet. Making every consumer of health care cost-conscious will spread market discipline throughout the system, the thinking goes, and contain prices more successfully than commands from on high. Indiana is now the largest test laboratory in America for this concept as applied to health care. And the results are encouraging. Not only are the customers satisfied, but overuse of

emergency rooms and specialists has declined, use of generic drugs has risen, the state's cost for insuring its workers has been reduced, and—most remarkable—the participants have accumulated in their personal Health Savings Accounts combined reserves of nearly \$60 million. That's \$60 million worth of health security for the future.

The tax-free Health Savings Accounts (HSAs) for out-of-pocket expenses are just one feature of Indiana's CDHP for state workers, along with high-deductible insurance and 100 percent coverage of preventive care. The state deposits money in each worker's HSA every pay period, and employees can make contributions as well. Employees receive a simple statement every month showing deposits, expenditures, and balances.

It's the HSA that users seem to appreciate most, judging by interviews with a dozen state workers approached at random in the main state office building here the other morning. "Actually, I love it," said one forty-ish paralegal who's been in her state job almost a year. "Saving those pre-tax dollars benefits me—I'm a single mom." A middle-aged administrator noted, "You're saving as you go, so you have the resources when you need them." Two others emphasized, "You decide how much you put in," and, "The state gives you money."

Still, some employees have tried a CDHP and preferred to return to traditional health insurance. Not many, though—under 3 percent.

State budget hawks are delighted at the savings. An independent analysis by the consulting firm Mercer in 2010 concluded that the CDHPs reduced costs to the state by 10.7 percent per year, for projected savings of \$17 to \$23 million in 2010. That's in addition to the \$7 to \$8 million employees themselves were projected to save.

The users' savings come from cost-conscious decision-making. "Employees and dependents have historically been . . . shielded from the actual costs of health care services," noted Mercer. CDHP "participants are exposed to the full cost of health care services and forced to

decide if the care is appropriate." Providers, for their part, like receiving immediate payment, without the rigmarole of third-party reimbursement.

The common objection to market-based schemes is fear that people paying out of pocket won't go to the doctor. Mercer found "no evidence that participants in the CDHPs are avoiding care"—no reporting of health difficulties resulting from deferred care, no flood of complaints, no exposés in the press, barely a trickle of participants returning to traditional insurance. At

others just aren't up to making their own decisions—they're foolish or they're victims or they're not bright enough; for whatever reason, they can't sort out the complexities of life. But in a free society, people *must* be trusted with their own decisions," he says, adding, "We'll always help people who are down."

As the driving force behind the introduction of consumer-driven health care in the state, Daniels paid close attention to the system's design. He made sure that the HSA

Maximum personal-cost calculations

Single coverage	CDHP 1	CDHP 2	Trad PPO
Premium	\$147.42	\$793.26	\$3,283.02
Maximum out-of-pocket	\$4,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$2,500.00
State's HSA contribution	(\$1,123.20)	(\$673.92)	(0)
Total maximum personal cost	\$3,024.22	\$3,119.34	\$5,783.02
Family coverage	CDHP 1	CDHP 2	Trad PPO
Premium	\$411.32	\$2,233.40	\$9,136.40
Maximum out-of-pocket	\$8,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$5,000.00
State's HSA contribution	(\$2,249.52)	(\$1,347.84)	(0)
Total maximum personal cost	\$6,161.80	\$6,885.56	\$14,136.40

This chart, taken from the Open Enrollment packet for 2012, shows the costs to Indiana state employees of the two consumer-driven health plans and the traditional Preferred Provider Organization. Preventive care is covered in full under all three plans. As state workers steadily migrated out of traditional insurance over the last seven years, one of the traditional health plans previously offered went out of business, and a second CDHP was created.

present, CDHP participants are getting preventive care at rates *higher* than those in the traditional plan, according to the governor's office.

While the savings alone are eye-catching, especially with control of health care costs by fiat continuing to fail nationally, it is the intangible value of consumer-driven care that is primary for the mastermind of Indiana's reforms, Governor Mitch Daniels. Nearing the end of his second four-year term in office, Daniels is emphatic that this is the approach to health care "consistent with human dignity."

"Some people sincerely believe that

is the employee's personal property and goes with him when he leaves his state job. Any unused money in the account at the end of each year rolls over and may earn compound interest. In healthy years, employees' accounts grow, building reserves for less healthy times that may come. After the worker retires, the account can be used to pay Medicare premiums and deductibles and other health bills. And as long as it remains dedicated to health care, any balance left in the HSA upon the death of the participant passes tax free to a beneficiary named at the time of enrollment.

There's minimal paperwork. Participants must keep receipts in case they're audited by the IRS. Otherwise it's an honor system.

In response to concerns that participants might face hefty health bills early in the year, the state deposits half its HSA contribution in January and the rest in equal increments every pay period. By now the state offers two CDHPs with different premiums, deductibles, and maximum personal cost. The most that participants can contribute tax-free (\$3,100 for individuals, \$6,250 for families) is laid down by the IRS, not by Indiana.

In addition to the obvious basics like paying doctors, hospitals, pharmacies, and labs, HSA funds can be used for dozens of "allowable expenses," from substance-abuse treatment to guide dogs, accommodating without fuss the various needs and preferences of individuals and families. Each plan comes in a tobacco-free variant. If the employee signs a pledge not to use tobacco during the year and to undergo random nicotine testing, the state contributes more to his HSA: The tobacco-free bonus is slated to go up next year from \$25 to \$35 per paycheck. And if you're caught cheating? You lose your job.

Even as he prepares to leave office at the end of this year, Daniels is working to refine the system. Soon, a wide range of user-friendly information, including prices charged by different health care providers, is to be posted online. The idea is to make comparison shopping easier, as citizens become more used to controlling their health dollars.

It was Daniels, too, who persuaded Democrats in the legislature and bureaucrats in Washington to let him use a consumer-driven design for the Healthy Indiana Plan. Because it is funded not only from an increase in the cigarette tax but also with money reallocated from the state's Medicaid account, HIP required a waiver from the federal Department of Health and Human Services. Like the state employees' plan, HIP combines high-deductible insurance (a choice of three plans) with first-dollar coverage of preventive care and a state-funded HSA,

to which participants (if financially able) must contribute. In HIP, the state's contribution to the HSA rolls over only if routine preventive care is completed each year.

Whatever the success of Indiana's market-based reforms, their future is fraught with uncertainty. What Governor Daniels calls "the big hairy foot of Obamacare" is poised to crush them.

Or maybe not. It's impossible to get answers out of Washington these days, say those working on compliance with the Affordable Care Act. Federal bureaucrats are choking on thousands of pages of new regulations that interpret the thousands of pages of the law itself.

In 2011, Indiana legislators of both parties voted to adapt the Healthy Indiana Program as the vehicle for the expansion of Medicaid envisaged by Obamacare. But the state's request for a three-year renewal of its waiver for HIP was denied; a one-year waiver was granted.

One reason HIP may be viewed askance in Washington is that it is—quite deliberately—not an entitlement, but rather a means-tested, state-subsidized health plan available on a first-come, first-served basis until the allocated money is used up. The governor, who has balanced his budget for eight straight years and led Indiana into the elite of states with AAA credit ratings, insisted on *not* saddling the state with commitments he wasn't sure it could keep. He'd watched nearby Tennessee enact the open-ended "TennCare" entitlement, then, drowning in costs, have to scale it back under a Democratic governor.

At the moment, then, whether Indiana will expand its Medicaid program, and whether HIP will survive for long in any form, remains in doubt, confirms Seema Verma, a health care consultant to the governor. Surely, though, the consumer-driven health plans for state employees will be left alone?

Not so fast, says Daniels. Obamacare has already forced expensive changes in CDHP coverage. Inclusion of dependents up to age 26 on their

parents' insurance, a newly required "summary of benefits explanation," and free coverage of contraception together added roughly \$2.5 million to the cost of the state program this year. It was not good enough, apparently, for Hoosiers to pay for birth control from their HSAs.

Regulatory burdens and "poison pills" can clog even the best of programs, but what might actually kill Indiana's CDHPs, says the governor, is something called the "medical loss ratio": the requirement under Obamacare that at least 80 percent of premiums be spent on health care delivery and quality improvement as opposed to overhead. Washington ought to allow money spent from Health Savings Accounts to count toward the 80 percent, but so far it hasn't. Indiana's popular, effective consumer-driven plans are thus in jeopardy.

It's an epic clash: faith in experts and compulsory, abstract rules made far away versus respect for the choices of ordinary citizens and their locally elected representatives.

As part of his farewell to government, Mitch Daniels wrote a book last year distilling what he has learned working in business, working in Washington for two Republican administrations, and serving his home state. It's called *Keeping the Republic: Saving America by Trusting Americans*, and the chapter on health care ends with a *cri de coeur*:

Obamacare must be undone and replaced not merely as a matter of sound health policy, not merely because it promises to damage a staggering national economy, not merely because it will hasten the bankruptcy of the American government. Obamacare must be undone for the even more fundamental reason that, in its essence, it demeans and diminishes the rights of the free people Americans were intended to be.

This is not grandiosity. The health care conundrum is quite properly seen in the context of the larger struggle over what sort of people we are and what policies are congruent with human nature. We really are facing that kind of a choice. ♦

Randall Terry Shoots an Ad

The anti-abortion crusader's latest campaign

BY MATT LABASH

Romney, W.V.

Of all the divergent byways the Road to the White House provides, there are none so curious as the detour that has me pushing out to the eastern panhandle of West Virginia to spend a week with Randall Terry, his family, and his hive of pro-life activists. Here, I will hunker down with the head of the Society for Truth and Justice, Terry's current organization. Two decades ago, as founder of Operation Rescue, Terry was the most celebrated, dreaded, and despised pro-life agitator in America, leading a movement that saw 70,000 arrests in abortion protests in the largest civil disobedience efforts since civil rights days. He's been arrested nearly 50 times himself for actions such as chaining himself to an abortion clinic sink and presenting Bill Clinton with an aborted fetus. All told, Terry's spent over a year of his life in jail.

At his mountain compound, we will argue religion. We will watch abolitionist movies for inspiration. We will drink whiskey late into the night while having fetus-friendly jam sessions in his basement office/TV studio, with Terry holding down vocals and piano or guitar while performing songs of his own composition such as "Cryin' for You Baby," sung in the style of his musical hero, Barry Manilow.

Matt Labash is a senior writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

But I'm leaping ahead, and these are sideshows, besides. While I don't at all mind fraternizing with whiskey-drinking, antislaving, pro-life activists, this isn't a social call. I've dropped in on Terry because he is cutting 30-second TV ads for himself and his crew of mercenaries, who are running in elections throughout the country—mostly congressional. None of them expects or is even trying to win. Terry, in addition to a congressional race in Florida that he's not truly competing in, is also not truly competing on the presidential

ballot in three states as an independent. But that's all beside the point. Because Terry boisterously predicts the cumulative effect of their graphic anti-abortion ads, which stations must run because of their federal candidacies, will do nothing less than dislodge the most pro-choice president in U.S. history under the weight of 52 million dead babies.

Dead babies. There you have it. It causes discomfort, but I said it outright. Terry would approve, since that's what he calls them, mirroring his conviction. It's my conviction too, I suppose, since I'm a pro-lifer when I think about it, which like many of similar stripe, I mostly don't. But if we're being honest, I'm not as convicted as the kind of people who use formulations like "dead babies" in polite conversation. It's the kind of talk that causes even many pro-lifers to nervously scan the horizon for avenues of escape from the barking mad guy who thinks he's an Old Testament prophet.

"Dead babies" are words that arrive weaponized. You'll notice Terry doesn't call dead babies "the unborn," or frame their plight in the context of the "right to life" or



Randall Terry makes a joyful noise on his 1898 Steinway D.

THE WEEKLY STANDARD / MATT LABASH

“reproductive choice.” He will often call a Planned Parenthood center an “abortion mill,” but otherwise rarely even uses the word abortion. “You *abort* the takeoff of a rocket,” he says mockingly. “You *murder* a human being.” He prefers calling abortion “baby killing,” and abortionists “baby killers.”

I dwell on the words “dead babies” because they animate and illuminate every corner of Randall Terry’s large and often messy life. They undergird his credo, which is elegantly simple, and it goes like this: If you believe abortion is murder, then act like it. He seeks not to persuade, but to offend. Or to persuade by offending.

To go see Randall Terry, who lives in a no-horse town, you push through the one-horse town of Romney—no relation to Mitt—where Dairy Queen counts as a sit-down restaurant and where even the Chevy dealership has three crosses planted in front of it, not just for Jesus but for the two thieves (though nobody tends to steal much in Romney).

Terry’s SUV meets me at his nearly impossible-to-find turnoff, where we’re faced with a dilemma. Take a rickety wooden bridge that doesn’t look like it could bear the weight of a housecat, or traverse a shallow stream. He lustily rips off through the rushing water, and I follow (the hell with it, my car’s a rental). After climbing a half-mile up a dirt road that doesn’t seem convinced of itself, we arrive at the top of a scenic mountain, with a vista of the poplars, red oaks, and sugar maples that carpet the surrounding Appalachians.

Terry greets me warmly, wearing cargo pants and alligator boots. I’ve seen him in YouTube videos, many of them gleaned from his temporarily-suspended-on-account-of-the-election television show, syndicated to mostly Christian stations. It’s called *Randall Terry: The Voice of Resistance*. On it, he might play piano-ballad pro-life-themed parodies. Or music videos in which a firing squad wearing Obama masks execute baby dolls with paintball guns to the strains of Alice Cooper’s “Dead Babies.” Or he might dump bloody plastic fetuses on the conference table in Nancy Pelosi’s office to drive the point home, in his own subtle way. Terry describes the show as “a hybrid of Stephen Colbert, Rush [Limbaugh], and John the Baptist.”

But flashing back to his late ’80s Operation Rescue heyday, I’m reminded that Terry’s hair, once a white man’s afro, has gone close-cropped and respectable. Or as respectable as Terry can get, which isn’t very. His ideological opponents call him things like “ineffectual clown,” “asshole no one likes,” and “extremist antichoice fameball.” His ideological soulmates sometimes call him worse.

Terry inflames passions on both sides of the ball because he is not averse to exceeding the limits of what most consider rational behavior. Plus, he freely criticizes

nearly everyone else for not pushing as hard as he does, and for pulling punches to preserve their precious tax-exempt 501(c)(3) status, which Terry has always rejected so that he can say whatever about whomever he wants. Too much of pro-life activism these days, he says, is about getting your picture taken with a purportedly pro-life congressman who won’t do anything about dead babies, so you can run it in your newsletter, so you can raise more tax-exempt revenue: “The pro-life movement became the pro-life establishment. The pro-life establishment became the pro-life industry. The pro-life industry became collaborators. There is *money* in this. Hundreds of millions, perhaps billions of dollars, have been raised off the ‘cause.’ So these people become collaborators.” Therefore, admits Terry, “I’m a pain in the ass to the pro-life movement. I’m a nightmare to the baby killers. So the baby killers hate me, and the pro-lifers hate me, because I make them look bad.”

Act first, count the costs later—if ever—is pretty much his operating philosophy. One of his best friends, Gary McCullough, director of the Christian Newswire publicity service, describes scuba drift-diving with Terry off Singer Island in Florida. Says McCullough: “As Randall descended, he was experiencing pain in the eyes. But rather than return to the surface and find out what was wrong, he continued descending. . . . He foolishly would not let the pain keep him from completing the dive and in the process broke most every blood vessel in both eyes. For the next 24 hours, he looked like a sci-fi monster, in that every white part of his eyes was now bright red. When most would wisely retreat, Randall will move forward. In the process, he may make mistakes that harm himself, make him look like a fool or monster, but quitting, or even slowing down, is not in his nature.”

Though the scenery is impressive, Terry’s compound is a large, no-frills, dun-colored bunkhouse, all cinderblock and window AC units. When he fled an expensive mortgage in Falls Church, Virginia (his income is almost entirely dependent on supporters), and started renting this for a song nearly two years ago, the building was a recently shuttered Catholic home for adults with Down syndrome. Surveying the spartan rooms with dated furniture and dry-erase boards on the doors bearing visitors’ names, I ask him what I should call this place. Koresh-ville? No, he says, rolling his eyes. “We’re not a cult.”

His cohorts, he assures me, basically serve as independent pro-life missionaries who raise their own funds. When they live and work with him, he covers room and board. Many come in from out of state, stay for a few days, then leave. Unlike the Branch Davidians, they don’t believe in Terry’s messianic power, and most feel free to shoot him down when he comes up with half-baked pro-life capers, criticism he’ll even solicit since, as he confesses, “I have a

tendency to overreach.” Nobody objected, however, to the grandiose name he’s given the place. “We call it the House of Ascalon—the name of the spear St. George used to slay the dragon,” he beams.

Living in a sequestered two-bedroom apartment within Ascalon are Terry’s second wife, Andrea, and their four sons. Terry also has a biological adult daughter with his first wife (they split in 1999) and raised three black children with her, two of whom they adopted and their half-sister (he talked their mother out of an abortion at a clinic protest in the ’80s). Terry’s adopted son, Jamiel—with whom he publicly sparred over Jamiel’s homosexuality—was killed in a car accident last November. (More on that later—as I said, Terry’s life is often messy.) Randall and Andrea’s four boys were born between 2002 and 2006. “It’s sad that my wife can’t be pleased by television,” jokes Terry, an evangelical who converted to Catholicism in 2006 and is not a fan of artificial birth control. Andrea is not the barefoot’n’pregnant type, however. A brainy former Hill staffer with Lisa Loeb glasses and a switchblade wit, she says when they first moved out to the sticks, she went into town to Rite Aid to ask for her favorite magazine, the *Economist*. The clerk looked at her dumbfounded, saying, “We only have regular magazines.”

“So you carry the *Economist*?” retorted Andrea.

“You’re not from around here, are you?” the clerk said.

The boys are spirited but well disciplined. Over the week, they whip me at Bughouse Chess, and are elated when they’re allowed to think they whipped me at arm-wrestling. They all seem to bear middle names that pay tribute to Terry’s favorite hard-chargers: Charlemagne, Winston, Theodore (after Teddy Roosevelt), William (after Braveheart himself, William Wallace). “We’re raising little warriors,” Terry smiles. “Not little warriors, just warriors,” corrects Andrea.

The kids run outside to shoot their bows-and-arrows at a target. “Remember to shoot uphill instead of down, arrows sail!” Terry yells, which for him, passes as caution.

Over the week, I’m exposed to the floating cast of Terry’s pro-life Hole-in-the-Wall-Gang. In from D.C., there’s Missy Smith, his presidential running mate, who said in her press-release rollout, “I killed two of my babies by abortion, and I know the private hell that millions of women live in day after day because of their ‘safe legal abortion.’” Missy became a full-time pro-life activist after reading a Mona Charen column on fetal harvesting—the process whereby body parts of the aborted are sold for scientific use. Terry ran Smith’s unsuccessful 2010 run for Congress against Eleanor Holmes Norton in Washington, D.C., in which Missy carpet-bombed the local airwaves with 225 graphic ads. This garnered thousands of death threats and 6 percent of the vote.

In from Virginia is George Offerman, a psychotherapist who has also brought his 17-year-old son, Matthew, who accompanies him to “abortion mill” protests. Offerman

nearly became a priest, until he was turned off after two priests hit on him. “People ask, ‘Did you remain chaste in seminary?’ And I say, ‘It depends how you spell ‘chased.’”

Offerman nearly chucked Catholicism and pro-life activism, becoming disillusioned with both. He felt the National March for Life each year had become “like a circus, a social gathering. Could you imagine Jews going to Auschwitz and doing that. ‘Dude, bring a bottle of wine. Picnic at Oven 4!’” But he stayed Catholic and in the fight, partly as a result of spending time in psych units, where he found one suicidal woman after another that he treated mentioning abortion. He met Terry at a clinic protest a few years back and admired his commitment to the cause. Everyone else protested from the sidewalk (as mandated by federal law). But Terry wormed his way into the office building harboring the clinic, so that he could talk women out of abortions in the lobby, by telling authorities he had to go see his accountant. Terry’s accountant conveniently had an office in the building, says Offerman, though Terry had to call him to show up on a Saturday, thus giving Terry the legal excuse.

John and Ruth Cosgrove are in from St. Louis, both manning the kitchen. Ruth likes to make Mudslides and play Monkees songs on her Kindle, mischievously trying to charge me \$10 per Diet Coke so that they have more money to run ads. Ruth has worked for an abused-children’s shelter, and says she often hears the argument that children would be better off aborted than abused. Which she calls nonsense. “I was an abused child,” she says. “I wouldn’t say I’d be better off dead.” John, who is a chef back home, and who keeps the group dining table filled with everything from chicken satay to beef brisket, came to pro-lifedom racked with guilt for taking his high-school girlfriend to get an abortion. Years later, he went back to see her, to gauge whether she was as conscience-stricken as he was. “It was the best decision I ever made,” she said, to his disappointment. “I would’ve been fat for my prom.”

There’s Muriel McConnon, a retired accounting-firm office manager, up from Florida. Muriel enjoys drinking nonalcoholic O’Douls while playing air piano on Randall’s desk in the basement, as Randall bangs out boogie-woogie tunes on the real thing, preferring his drinks a little stronger. (Before I arrived, Terry warned me, “You better drink. . . . Never trust a journalist who doesn’t drink.”) But despite Muriel’s grandmotherly appearance, she turns out to be hardcore. Once, after being arrested with Terry at an abortion protest, she found herself serving 31 days in jail, her cot in between a prostitute’s and a murderer’s. She played chess with the murderer. I ask Muriel if she won. “Of course,” she says.

Some of the rest of the crew are regulars. Gary Boisclair, Terry’s aide-de-camp who says he’s a “full time pro-life missionary,” lives on the grounds. A young-De Niro look-alike

who favors “Infidel” T-shirts, Boisclair ran in a Democratic primary this year against Rep. Keith Ellison of Minnesota, even though he wasn’t living in the state. “Democrats know how to fight for the little guy, and I’m fighting for the littlest guy,” he told the *Star Tribune*. Boisclair wanted to punish Ellison not only with dismembered-baby ads (Ellison being pro-choice), but also because the Muslim Ellison took his oath of office on a Koran. Boisclair got creamed. So I facetiously offer that maybe he’d have done better if he’d depicted Ellison butchering babies *with* a Koran. “We just don’t have the CGI going yet,” Boisclair shrugs.

Then there’s David Lewis, who used to work an IT job at a bank, but who’s come on with Terry full time. Lewis has starred in all manner of Terry-sponsored capers, from calling HHS secretary Kathleen Sebelius a “murderer” during her speech at Georgetown University, to opposing John Boehner in a Republican primary for caving on his promise to defund Planned Parenthood. Terry’s army goes after pro-life Republicans as often and aggressively as they do pro-choice Democrats when they think their issue has been sold out. Lewis was smoked by Boehner, but at least he was able to voice his concerns in person. “Even if it was through a bullhorn at the March for Life this past January,” he qualifies. Lewis also boasts of garnering all kinds of media coverage when he did a sit-in at Boehner’s office. Even *Vanity Fair* wrote him up, he says, “Though it was to clown on my shirt. I was wearing an orange shirt with a suit. They didn’t like that at all.”

Also in the lineup is Andrew Beacham, who edits and produces Terry’s television show. Beacham is a talented visual artist with a long ponytail, who says that his hairstyle-of-understanding makes him look empathetic when he sneaks into NARAL functions. He’s made headlines for stunts like yelling down Obama at a Notre Dame speech when the president was controversially honored by the Catholic university, for which he got punched in the stomach by a student’s mother.

Beacham’s running for Congress in Kentucky (where he doesn’t live) in order to air his anti-Obama ads, one of which will be released shortly after I’ve left, generating national headlines. As his spot shows photos of dismembered fetuses, Beacham informs viewers that Obama gives your money to Planned Parenthood, who “murder babies.” While flashing pictures of Middle Eastern Christians with their throats cut, the voiceover adds that Obama also gives your money “to the Muslim Brotherhood, who murder Christians and Jews” (a reference to U.S. aid to Egypt, now run by the Muslim Brotherhood). Wearing a straw hat, Beacham closes his ad looking like a bug-eyed hillbilly, as he exhales a cloud of cigar smoke, intoning, “If you vote for Obama, the real question is, what are you smoking?”

A stute political observers could be forgiven for wondering how Terry’s ragtag outfit could, as Terry puts it, “bring down a sitting president with dead babies.” If I were a betting man, my money would be on “not especially likely.” But that doesn’t mean Terry doesn’t have an elaborate strategy. He’s been market-testing it for years. He challenged Obama in Democratic primaries to force the FCC to allow his dead-baby ads to run during the Super Bowl in states where he could get on the ballot. Earlier this year, he did, in fact, beat Obama outright in 14 counties in Oklahoma. “And I’m prepared to take the oath of office for those counties,” Terry adds gamely. Granted, it was Oklahoma, where Obama only got 34 percent more of the vote in 2008 than I did, and I wasn’t running. Still, it was a closed primary, and Terry’s efforts were good for 18 percent of the vote (the party stripped him of his delegate).

But Terry’s machinations in the general election aren’t entirely fanciful. He points to a recent poll conducted by the pro-life Susan B. Anthony List in four big swing states (including Florida and Ohio), which indicates that abortion is an unexploited avenue of attack. By a 2-1 margin, undecideds said they were less likely to vote for Obama after learning about his inclusion of taxpayer-funding for abortions in Obamacare. Sixty-six percent of swing voters were less likely to vote for candidates supporting the HHS mandate that forces faith-based institutions to provide health coverage for abortion-inducing drugs. Even 49 percent of voters leaning toward Obama are less likely to do so after learning of his opposition to a law that prevented babies from being left to die after a failed abortion.

Terry says if he were just Joe Super-PAC, most stations would tell him to get lost with his offensive ads. But where he and his comrades are on the ballot, the FCC is anti-choice when it comes to TV stations running candidate ads. They’re required to run them, so long as Terry can pay for them. Which he vows he’ll have no problem doing. He says recent fundraising has been robust. He sends out Internet versions of the ads to his mailing lists, along with a help-us-broadcast-this pitch.

Terry’s slate isn’t big—there are only six candidates including Terry. But he counts four times since he’s on the presidential ballot in Nebraska, West Virginia, and Kentucky, and is running against Rep. Alcee Hastings in Florida as well. Hastings’s district can reach the core of Obama’s support in South Florida, which encompasses nearly a third of the population of the state. Terry’s internal Florida polling shows that hardcore “anti-baby-killing ads” can suppress Obama’s vote by 4 percent if people see them (Obama won the state by 2.8 percentage points in 2008). But what is important to Terry isn’t how many candidates are running, it’s how many swing-state television markets can be reached. For example, depending on where Terry buys ads in West

Virginia, those ads can also hit Ohio, North Carolina, Virginia, and Pennsylvania.

Terry's plan, then, is to wage what he baldly calls a "voter suppression campaign." He knows full well his ads will turn off large swaths of voters. But he's only playing for a segment of the electorate—the 54 percent of Catholics and the 26 percent of evangelicals who voted for "the quintessential child killer in the Western Hemisphere" in 2008. His ads are designed to drown those voters in shame and the blood of dead babies. They can vote for Mitt Romney or not. He doesn't really care. "They can vote for Mickey Mouse, they can vote for their mothers," Terry says. "Just don't vote for Obama."

I point out to Terry that abortion was legal before Obama took office, and it will remain legal after he leaves. No matter, he posits. If pro-lifers could knock off a sitting president, abortion is back on the map regardless of the Supreme Court makeup. "We might not be able to form a government, but boy, we can bring one down."

Terry's first shot, already airing, targets the actor Samuel L. Jackson, who plugged Planned Parenthood in a viral f-bomb-rich pro-Obama ad called "Wake the F— Up." Terry's ad, packed with dead-baby carnage (many of the photos he uses in ads come from photographer Monica Miller, who retrieves fetal remains from dumpsters), points out that Planned Parenthood was founded by Margaret Sanger, who "wanted to abort black babies and sterilize black men and women." Since only 12 percent of the population is black, but over 30 percent of aborted babies are, "That's black genocide," says Terry. "He's carrying water for racists. Mr. Jackson needs to wake up and smell the burning crosses" (KKK and lynching images flash across the screen). If that isn't edgy enough, Terry also launched a website—uncletomjackson.com—which features both the ad and a longer form video starring Terry as a recurring character he plays on his television show, Sir Reginald Bling.

Bling, as the name suggests, is pimped out in a fedora, dookie rope, and Sir Mix A Lot-style glasses. He speaks in a heavy—how shall we say—inner-city dialect. There's no blackface involved, but close. Bling/Terry's effort is a response video in the faux-Seussian style of the original Jackson video. A typical couplet: *Who do racists at Planned Parenthood turn to call on? / Samuel L. Jackson, the new Uncle Tom.* Like Jackson, renowned for his f-bombs, Terry wasn't going to bleep out any of the "m—f—ers" in the ad. But in checking with his team, cooler heads (such as they are) prevailed.

Not that Terry has an aversion to f-bombs. He's surprisingly salty for a pro-life activist, and also has a healthy taste for grain and grape, a function, he says, of his long journey toward Catholicism, where he was tutored by "very earthy men. It freed

me from this false spirituality of Pentecostal pharisaism."

Being from the earthy-Protestant school myself, I good-naturedly give Terry plenty of business about switching teams, papal infallibility, and kid-touching church scandals. I inquire whether he's ever seen Mary on a piece of toast. "Don't make fun of a guy's mother," he cautions, "especially not your savior's." But his new friends, he says, freed him. "Once I realized you could have a beer, and when I heard a bishop say 'that guy is a f—ing asshole,' my head snapped around and I thought, 'He's a real man.' True holiness is obedience to the Ten Commandments. But if I'm with a bunch of guys in a foxhole, and I'm at war with evil, I don't want guys that are . . . timid. I want guys that are just and holy and will protect my back and aren't going to piss and whine at me about things that are insubstantial."

Believe it or don't, but the timing of Terry's continuous-take performance as Bling is dead-on. The Internet ad is reasonably funny. As is Terry generally, which he doesn't mind telling you. In his official bio, he points out that he "is a prankster, a practical joker; friends say he has a great sense of humor."

Terry, I find, is often funny like Michael Scott, the character played by Steve Carell on *The Office*. When Scott, the befuddled boss at a paper-manufacturing company who wants to be loved by his subordinates, performs a Chris Rock routine in the office replete with n-words, he can't understand why everyone is horrified: "How come Chris Rock can do a routine and everybody finds it hilarious and groundbreaking, and I go do the exact same routine, same comedic timing, and people file a complaint to corporate?" Similarly, sometimes Terry is funny because he's trying to be. And sometimes he's funny because he's not.

If the Samuel L. Jackson spot is a warmup, Terry's main chance is what he calls "The Nightmare Ad," the planning of which throws Terry into a whirlwind manic blur. "I'm a dog on a bone," he says of his creative intensity. Even during protracted interviews, he often paces like a caged animal. The only time he ever sits still is while making the entire house—even his children—watch *Amazing Grace*, the 2006 biopic about William Wilberforce, the British abolitionist, which made him sob the first time he saw it. He pours himself a Rolling Rock, and me a bourbon, and tucks into the film like he's reading his own diary. To Terry's thinking, slavery, the Holocaust, dead babies—they're all on the same social-justice continuum.

When asked whether he isn't overlooking the successes of the establishment pro-life movement, Terry grows enraged. You can point out to Terry, as Clarke Forsythe of Americans United For Life has written, that the last 20 years of pro-life activity have seen scores of abortion battles won, from the passage of informed consent laws to ultrasound requirements to a 33 percent rate of reduction in abortions

since 1990 to polls showing a record low number of Americans considering themselves pro-choice. But Terry's aggressively dismissive.

How can partial success be considered success? "Take that question, remove the word 'abortion,' and insert the words 'slavery' or 'killing Jews.' Then see if it feels stupid. It's bullshit, it's always been bullshit!" Great, says Terry, if abortions are reduced and there are fewer places to get them. But so what? People are still allowed to get them. "MLK wouldn't have been happy," he says, "if they told Rosa Parks, 'You can sit in the front on this one bus, but not on the rest.'"

The Nightmare Ad Terry is planning is a template ad—all his candidates will use it, dropping in their names and visages at the end. Planning for it comes to resemble a multi-front war. In Terry's large basement nerve-center, where his cubicle is adorned with a Winston Churchill cigar box, he meets with his team at the conference table, which sits next to a wardrobe containing the guerrilla-theater props they take on their pro-life harassment tours: fake blood containers, chicken suits, slave chains, bloody plastic fetus dolls. I mention that those last look like KFC's honey BBQ wings. "That's sick," says Terry. "I'm sick?" I reply. "You're the one with the box of plastic fetus dolls."

The team hovers over laptops, cursing the slow Internet connection, looking at the best abortion and Islamic violence stills and video. In addition to cutting one Nightmare Ad featuring the usual abortion viscera, Terry wants to hammer Obama on playing piggy bank to the Muslim Brotherhood. He figures both ads hit the same target, and are complementary.

As a dutiful Christian, I ask him if he isn't being a little hard on our Muslim brothers and sisters. Though my heart's not really in it, as the week I'm here, cable news is wallpapered with footage of our dead ambassador to Libya getting dragged through the street. He says he'll bottom-line it succinctly: "Jesus died to start Christianity. Muhammad killed to start Islam." Although Jesus, he says, is no pushover. "Christ would send Muhammad to burn in hell forever. If you think we're extreme, wait till the day of judgment, baby!"

The man putting Terry's ad together, Ryan Holmberg, who has his own production company in Nashville and typically shoots things like country music or fitness videos, finds some choice Islamic extremist footage. On LiveLeak, there's a recent clip of a Christian convert getting beheaded for going apostate, while his Islamic beheaders chant "Allahu Akbar." We all gag a little. But Terry is so upset, he gets up and leaves the room for 10 minutes. You would think after all these years of looking at photos of abortion gore, Terry would have a cast-iron stomach. But the sight of blood unjustly shed never ceases to revolt him.

On another afternoon, a group of us find ourselves in

Terry's studio, which adjoins the office. In it are his ornate desk, his bookshelves stacked with leather-bound volumes, his Churchill statuette. Off to the side, in front of a green-screen, are three electric guitars, and his prized possession: a nine-foot 1898 Steinway D—"the ultimate piano ever made," Terry says. While Terry bangs around on it with wild abandon, resting a drink on it is tantamount to placing a glass on his wife's head, I learn the hard way. In the back of the room are three wooden church pews under an "Amen Corner" sign, beneath a stained glass window depicting St. Bernard calling Crusaders to take the Holy Land.

In front of the camera is the aforementioned David Lewis, who, now that he's done tormenting John Boehner in his orange shirt, is running on Terry's slate as an independent candidate for Congress in Kentucky (for the purpose of broadcasting into Ohio). Lewis commands us to get out of his sightline, saying with mock fury, "I am a professional freaking actor!"

He's not. Though he tells us that he did play the lead in *Aladdin*, his third-grade musical. He still remembers the songs. Lewis isn't the natural performer Terry is. So Terry fusses and frets over his every intonation, spitting the line as he wants Lewis to say it, telling him to punch out certain syllables, trying to spark up Lewis's monotone to bring the hellfire regarding Obama. "C'mon, pathos! That sonofabitch—he's a baby killer!"

"Like you have testicles!" Beacham yells, piling on from the control room.

Lewis tries to impersonate a pro-life pitbull, with mixed results. Terry flips out when people keep flushing the toilet upstairs, mucking up the sound. You can feel the tension. To cut it, Lewis breaks into one of his old numbers from *Aladdin*: "A whole new world . . ."

But I never see Terry quite so worked up as the night he shoots the main portion of the Nightmare Ad. In a back bedroom at Ascalon, Madeline Scoular, a part-time actress in from Florida, who also happens to be the daughter of Terry's vice-presidential candidate Missy Smith, lies in a bed. She will be filmed having the nightmare, which will be intercut with all the visuals of dead babies (and dead Christians/Jews for the alternative Islamo-cut), as Obama atrocities are detailed in voiceover. She will then bolt awake in sweaty terror, crying that she can't vote for Obama again.

It's not *Masterpiece Theatre*, but Madeline is a pro. She's used to doing commercials for the likes of Honda Pilots or Johnsonville Sausages. Though she's pro-life personally (her infant is crying down the hallway), this is her first baby-killer ad. But even though she knows what she's doing, Terry and Ryan (who shoots the commercial with a handheld) leave nothing to chance. An eerie blue light is set up outside her window. A fogger is turned on in the bathroom, coating the room in a mist. Onlookers are sent to the kitchen, because

Terry doesn't want the room to get "too hot." There's a crucifix behind the bed, but Terry wonders if they should put up a Star of David too (for South Florida voters).

Terry has selected Madeline's pajama tank-top to get just the right contrast and tasteful level of cheesecake. Madeline is an attractive woman, and Terry thinks it's a force multiplier to let her look a "little saucy."

"But not too much sauce," cautions Ryan.

"Put the blanket down just a whisker," Terry says. "I want to get her breasts in a couple of these shots . . . bosoms is the old English word. I apologize, ma'am." "Personalities is what my grandmother used to call them," says Madeline, forgivingly.

Terry is so keyed up for the shoot, he breaks into impromptu prayer. He prays earnestly, beseechingly. He asks the Lord to stoke Ryan's incredible creativity and make this "the highlight of his filmmaking career." He prays God will "bless this dear lady," and thanks Him for her "beauty and articulateness." He asks the Father for an anointing, that the Lord will turn this commercial into a sledgehammer to avenge dead babies. He's prayed for everyone and everything in the room, except for me. After Terry says "Amen," I tell him that I'm a little hurt he left me out.

"I don't give a damn about you," he says with clockwork timing, as he grabs the water bottle he will use to spray Madeline in Obama-nightmare sweat.

One afternoon, Terry meets me at a local Mexican joint. The place is no great shakes—its décor is of the 10-point-buck-painted-on-a-Budweiser-mirror variety. All the food comes covered in puddles of yellow cheese, and the salsa tastes straight out of an Old El Paso jar. But Terry eyes the place like a pie-eyed kid, saying he's never been here before. "How's that?" I ask him. There's only about three sit-down restaurants in Romney.

"Money," he says. The Ascalon army has all their necessities covered, but everything they raise goes back into the baby-saving operation. His associates don't draw salaries, and with all his kids, eating out is expensive. As we talk over the course of lunch and many other interviews, Terry replays his life. He speaks of his childhood in Rochester, N.Y., where he was raised by two public school teachers. They were both

liberals and "pagans," he jokes, but always had a social conscience. He remembers looking out of his house, seeing his parents get arrested for blockading their residential street in order to get the speed limit lowered.

Terry was a good student, but school bored him. He was more interested in smoking pot, taking mushrooms, and becoming a rock'n'roll star. So when he announced to his father he was dropping out just months shy of graduation to hitchhike across America, which is exactly what he did, his dad beat him until he was black and blue. His father was a mean alcoholic who'd been abandoned by his own parents, and who roughed up his mother. He could also be very loving. They later reconciled, and by the end of his dad's life, he was working the pro-life cause with his son. As Terry's written of his dad, "From some men, we learn what to do. From

some men, we learn what not to do. From some men, we learn both."

After being robbed of all his possessions while sleeping on a beach in Galveston, Terry returned home from his hitchhiking odyssey, cleaned up, and worked a series of jobs, from ice-cream jerk to used-car salesman—the latter of which is a detail that never escapes the notice of snarky profilers. "It's honorable work," Terry says, even though his bosses loathed him, since he always leveled with customers, telling

them what cars not to buy.

Terry found religion, went to Elim Bible Institute, and moved through some fervent Pentecostal circles. Wishing to join the ministry, he married his fiancée (Cindy), against his better judgment, when a senior mentor at his church pressed an impressionable Terry hard to do so, saying it was necessary if he wanted to continue down the ministerial path. Though Terry says he gave it a go for 18 years, they were a bad match. His marriage was filled with unhappiness he resisted escaping, since God-fearing Pentecostals don't get divorced, though he eventually did.

From his father, he received the gift of anger, both his blessing and his curse. He knows he uses it wrongly sometimes—he regrets plenty of things he has said over the years. He went to war against his own adopted son, Jamiel, whose sister Tila he saved when their prostitute mother was on her way to have an abortion. As she was walking into the clinic, he pleaded with her not to do it. He told their mother he could help her. She stopped in her tracks and said, "I prayed



Randall Terry, Ryan Holmberg, and Madeline Scoular—
hoping to cause nightmares for Barack Obama.

this morning—if you don't want me to kill this baby, you gotta send someone to help me.”

“I'm the answer to your prayers,” said Terry.

After years of serving as foster parents to Tila and her older brother Jamiel, as well as to their half-sister Ebony, the Terrys adopted Jamiel and Tila. (Ebony was an adult by then.) Terry has always preached against gay marriage and most things gay. So when Jamiel came out in 2004 in an article in *Out*, blasting his father, Terry fired back with a piece entitled “My Prodigal Son the Homosexual.” Terry expresses remorse about the public airing, but not about the message. “I didn't make the rules, and I can't change them,” Terry says.

He and Jamiel eventually patched it up—and Jamiel stayed pro-life, even if he also remained proudly gay. Terry plays me a funny voicemail he saved from Jamiel in which the latter tells Terry he loves him, a call made shortly before Jamiel was killed last November in a head-on collision. At the time of his death, Terry had been planning on embarking on a speaking tour with him, hashing out their differences with more mutual respect than they'd done the first time around. “I miss him,” he says. “I can't believe he's gone. I haven't had the chance to grieve properly. I wake up in the morning and just start crying. I'll be driving down the road and think, ‘I'd like to talk to Jamiel.’ But Jamiel's not here.”

If the anger he felt at his son wasn't terribly constructive, Terry recalls the first time his righteous anger was kindled. In Rochester, when he was a kid, several girls had been abducted, raped, and murdered. One day, while riding with his mother down a road where one of the crimes occurred, she told Terry she'd heard that one of the girls had temporarily escaped her captor, and had run down that very road, naked and crying. Scores of cars passed, but no one stopped.

“I remember as a little boy,” says Terry, “being so filled with rage at those people that it made my insides hurt. They were responsible for her death. If any single one of them had stopped, she'd still be alive. It's ingrained in my soul that some of the greatest crimes men commit are sins of omission. You won't stop? You believe abortion is murder but you don't do anything? It revolts me to this day. I harbored that in my heart.”

Eventually, Terry got the call to be the one who stops. It's a line of work that caused even his pro-choice aunts (one of whom worked for Planned Parenthood) to publicly oppose him. Terry had been planning on going to the mission field. But a woman came to his church, telling of a show she'd seen on television about “child-killing.” He couldn't stop thinking about it. And when they broke up into little prayer groups, says Terry, “As crazy as this sounds, I saw this scroll come down in my mind's eye with instructions on what I was to do. I was to recruit people to go to abortion mills by the thousands. To help women in crisis have their babies

adopted instead of killed. I was to attempt to reestablish in the American public a love of human life.”

I ask Terry how the scroll looked. “Something like a Baskerville font,” he says. “Maybe Baskerville Old Face. It wasn't Arial. God knows I hate stark, boring lines.”

Shortly thereafter, he started Operation Rescue. The rest is history. The thousands arrested blockading abortion clinics in the late '80s and early '90s spawned a generation of activists. Abortion briefly showed up as the number one issue in election exit polls (these days, it's rarely mentioned). Terry's life was madness: a never-ending tour of courts and jails, constant appearances on television, moving money around like a mob boss, putting assets and supporters' donations in his wife's name to shield them from the injunctions and court orders and judgments that were coming at Terry and his organization like a hail of bullets which couldn't be dodged forever.

In 1991, Operation Rescue officially disbanded, “going underground,” Terry said, in an effort to dodge pro-choice lawyers. Many have laid claim to the name since, and Terry is now in a protracted and vicious trademark dispute with Troy Newman, the current president of Operation Rescue, who he maintains is guilty of “identity theft.” (Newman claims Terry abandoned the name.)

By 1994, several abortion doctors had been shot. (Though Terry is always quick to remind reporters that the doctors killed thousands of innocents, he is a staunch advocate of nonviolence.) Congress passed the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act, which carried heavy prison time for violators, and which essentially put an end to the Operation Rescue method of obstructing clinics. “It broke our backs,” Terry says.

Terry ignored the judgments that came down against him in cases brought by NOW and Planned Parenthood. He didn't want to “give a penny to the child killers.” Consequently, in the late '90s he was forced to file for bankruptcy, claiming \$1.6 million in debt from a decade's worth of judgments and legal fees. He lost pretty much everything. “NOW even got my frequent flyer miles,” he laments. “I told them they could use them to fly to hell.”

The picture grew bleaker by the time of his divorce in 1999, a huge no-no in the Pentecostal tradition. “My divorce was hell,” he says. Terry had spent plenty of time railing against divorce in pharisaical fashion himself (“I had to eat humble pie,” he says), and old friends turned on him. His longtime pastor put out a curious letter of censure, even though Terry had already quit the church months earlier, with inferences that Terry was unfaithful to his first wife and had left her for the younger woman he eventually married. A charge both Terry and his second wife, Andrea, who met Terry while working for one of his failed congressional

campaigns, adamantly deny. “We didn’t even have sex until we were married,” Terry overshares. “Two women in 35 years is pretty boring. But how can you prove a negative?”

The misery continued for years. Old Operation Rescue rivals scorched him on the Internet, seeming to delight in every rumor, from infidelity to financial mismanagement to his use of “alcohol and cigarettes.” Some continue doing so to this day, though several of Terry’s friends, including clergymen, rushed to his defense. Many of his longtime Protestant donors grew angry at him for becoming Catholic. Many Catholics probably wish he’d reconvert to Protestantism, as Terry’s a regular burr under the bishops’ saddles.

Recently, Terry says, he solicited a bishop for an endorsement of his anti-child-killing campaign. The bishop declined. “He told me face-to-face, ‘I love what you’re doing, but can’t endorse you.’ Why? Because he was afraid he would lose his 501(c)(3) status. He said we can’t oppose candidates by name. I said John the Baptist preached against Herod by name. He said, ‘John the Baptist did not have property. If he were alive today and had to worry about the property of the Catholic church, he wouldn’t say the things he said.’ I about crapped my pants. This is a Catholic bishop!”

Before his slow climb back from bankruptcy (friends eventually came to his aid, and he restarted his ministry, founding the Society for Truth and Justice in 2003), Terry even resumed selling used cars, failing miserably. With a broken marriage, a busted career, and a tarnished legacy, he remembers walking down a wharf in Worcester, Massachusetts. “I’m crying,” he says. “I’m saying my life is over, just over. And I see a duck come out swimming, with four ducklings right behind her. I felt like God said to me, ‘You’re going to get remarried, and you’re going to have four children.’ This time it wasn’t a scroll. Just a duck.”

Terry says his two sustaining influences were his wife and his music. “Music is part of the fiber of my soul,” says Randall, who before becoming an anti-abortion crusader, wanted to be both a concert pianist and a rock star. In his younger days, he’d felt God asked him to put music aside to save babies—both of which, he says, require total dedication to be any good at. But he felt God gave the green light to his original passion again when he took a yearlong Nashville sabbatical and knocked out a country and a gospel album. These twin influences, he says, “helped me find my voice again.” It’s a loud voice. One that he says knows “makes me a caricature.” As I find Terry agreeable company in person—he’s quick to laugh, a generous conversationalist, thoughtful about many things you wouldn’t think he’d be thoughtful about—I ask him why he doesn’t show his noncaricature side more often.

Because, Terry says, “I’m the dude that holds the line. I’m the public stand for righteousness, but the private extension of mercy.” He knows what critics think

of him, and with his musician’s ear, knows how he sounds. But he doesn’t care: “I play to an audience of one. I do what I do because I fear God and picture the day of judgment. On the day of judgment, I will give an account to my maker for the things that I did, and for the things that I failed to do. The things that I said. And the things that I failed to say. So I’m trying—desperately—to do and say the things that make my maker happy. Not my fellow human beings.”

In near-nightly jam sessions in his basement, Terry’s audience is slightly bigger than an audience of one. The rotating cast at Ascalon gathers around, drinking and dancing and calling out requests. I sit at his basement bar, upon which rests a statue of Moses. Nursing my Maker’s, I listen to Terry. He’s a seriously good pianist, and has serviceable guitar chops too. He plays covers like “Knockin’ on Heaven’s Door” but prefers playing his own songs, which sound better live than on his CDs. I try to locate Terry musically, and ask him his influences. As a player, he names several obscure blues musicians.

But as a vocalist, “I love Barry Manilow,” he says. And he’s dead serious. “We went and saw him in concert and he was awesome. I love Barbra Streisand too.” I tell him that for somebody who rails against homosexuality so frequently, he has really gay taste in music. “Let me tell you something right now,” he responds. “I love Barbra Streisand. I love showtunes. I love to cook. And I’m not gay. I feel so conflicted.”

One night, Terry decides to put a little band together. Andrew, his producer, is on electronic drums, since nobody can find the cymbals for the real drums. David Lewis takes lead guitar, and David’s dad, who is a mailman back home, plays a little rhythm guitar—very little. Terry’s 7-year-old son, Justin, an impish kid with a mane of blonde surfer locks, bangs on a discarded snare drum with his hands.

Terry tells everyone to follow his lead on piano, and takes off on a bluesy romp. The others try to hang with him, but nobody has his musicianship. David can play, but seems to have little idea what to do when Terry calls out for a solo. Andrew’s irregular bass pedal sounds like a wounded wildebeest limping to its death. Justin’s hand-drumming is drowning Andrew out with an entirely different Afro-Caribbean rhythm. And the mailman isn’t delivering, looking as though he wishes someone would unplug his amp.

The Psalmist enjoined us to make a joyful noise, but this is more like an awful racket. It sounds like something Army PSYOPs would play through loudspeakers to annoy a jihadist out of his hole. But Terry’s fingers are ripping and rolling and striding over the ivories. He smiles at the cacophonous trainwreck surrounding him, then ignores it and plays on. Somehow, he finds the thread of his song, even if he’s the only one who can hear it. ♦

Addicted to Race

The left's long twilight struggle against imaginary bigotry

BY NOEMIE EMERY

Slowly but surely, the toxin of bias is being leached out of American culture, if incrementally and by degrees. A Catholic was elected president in 1960, and since then Catholic nominees and candidates have become commonplace. A Jew was nominated in 2000 for vice president, and was a help to his ticket. In 2004 and 2008 respectively, Joe Lieberman and Rudy Giuliani ran for president, and their names and religions did not become issues. The country's first black president was elected four years ago by a fairly large margin. This year, a black woman and a Hispanic were the first choices of many Republican voters for vice president, and children of Hispanic and Indian immigrants are rising Republican stars. Pockets of bias remain, but this country has reached the stage at which no success is beyond the reach of any American for reasons other than personal failings. But as racism fades, concern over it seems to grow stronger than ever, at least with a clique on the left that longs to hold on to the issue, and works without stopping to keep race alive.

Once it became clear that old-fashioned racial prejudice truly was en route to extinction, a movement arose to insist that racism wasn't really down and out but had merely gone underground and lived on in nefarious guises, in some ways worse than before. In the mid-1980s came Critical Race Theory, which maintained that racism was ingrained and pervasive and never would fade. This was followed by "unconscious racism," "subliminal racism," "implicit racism," and "aversive racism," as underemployed academics and scholars sought to find words for inchoate feelings they found rather hard to describe. The gist of them all was that if people stopped saying or doing things thought of as racist it didn't mean they had ceased to be racist, but that they were sub-or-unconscious racists, who spoke in "dog whistles" or "code." Thus, if you couldn't convict people of what they said or they did, you could still indict them for what you thought they were feeling, these poseurs being the most tricky and sinister problem, as their subconscious, denied, and

subliminal bias was cloaked in the guise of good will.

This was good news to the philosopher Touré, who approvingly quoted Michelle Alexander's 2010 book *The New Jim Crow*, in his column in *Time* magazine: "Decades of cognitive research demonstrates that both unconscious and conscious biases lead to discriminatory actions even when an individual does not want to discriminate. . . . The fact that you may honestly believe that you are not biased against African Americans, and that you may have black friends and relatives, does not mean that you are free from unconscious bias."

Added to this is the theory of Racial Resentment, making its debut in the 1996 book *Divided by Color*, which attempted to "distinguish between those whites who are generally sympathetic toward blacks and those who are generally unsympathetic" by examining attitudes through which people express racism without actually mentioning race. Not surprisingly, these tend to be linked to conservative theories, such as seeing people as individuals, not as group members, objecting to those who rely upon welfare (unless in the case of a dire emergency), and thinking that blacks, like the Jews and the Irish, ought to work their way up by themselves. Counting these views as racist ignores the facts that (a) conservatives also resent whites who rely upon welfare and (b) respect blacks (and others) who rise on their merits, showing respect for Colin Powell the soldier, admiration for Herman Cain, who worked his way up to become a rich man and an industry leader, and veneration towards Condoleezza Rice, whose speech at the Republican convention in Tampa about her rise from her girlhood in the segregated city of Birmingham to the position of her country's top diplomat earned a prolonged and noisy ovation that brought the entire large crowd to its feet.

Nonetheless, such theories are staples of liberal discourse, used to discredit the center-right social agenda, based on Al Gore's belief that people who call themselves colorblind use the term "the way that duck hunters use their duck blind—they hide behind it and hope the ducks won't know what they're up to," as the then vice president once more or less famously said. The appeal of these theories is that no proof is needed; they assume guilt, and there is no way for those accused to prove their innocence. The response to people who

Noemie Emery is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD and a columnist for the Washington Examiner.

claim they have never done or said anything racist is to tell them that they are either subconsciously racist or have been sending out signals under the radar, by way of “dog whistles” or “code.”

This predicate—that racism is eternal, ubiquitous, and hidden, but not hidden so well that the left cannot find it—has given rise to a cascade of projection on the part of liberal pundits. In 2008, there was Timothy Noah’s breakthrough masterpiece, “When ‘Skinny’ Means ‘Black,’” claiming that references to Barack Obama’s slender and ectomorph qualities were an invitation to readers or listeners to fixate on his tawny hue. “Barack Obama is the first African American to win a major-party nomination for president. . . . African Americans are distinguishable from other Americans by their skin color. . . . When white people are invited to think about Obama’s physical appearance, the principal attribute they’re likely to dwell on is his dark skin.”

When Rep. Joe Wilson rudely erupted, “You lie!” during the president’s 2009 address on health care reform (Obama was talking about whether illegal immigrants would be qualified under his plan), a small voice sounded in Maureen Dowd’s subconscious, and she heard it say, “You lie, boy!”

When the Tea Party emerged, it was presumed to be racist, as there seemed no other possible reason to oppose this black president, and Tea Party members are the sort of people—entrepreneurial, small-town, and middle-America—liberals think racists should be. When Tea Party protests drove Obama’s poll numbers down in the summer of 2009, *Salon*’s Joan Walsh said the GOP had “blackened” him. When the Obama taunt this summer of “You didn’t build that!” met instantaneous pushback, Jonathan Chait of *New York* magazine said it had made people furious because it had made him seem black. “The key thing is that Obama is angry, and he’s talking not in his normal voice but in a ‘black dialect,’” Chait wrote. As a matter of fact, it was not a black dialect, but a demagogue’s accent. It ticked people off not because it was “black,” but because he came off as derisive and mocking, and dismissive of entrepreneurs and hard work.

Under the new rules, words seldom mean what they

used to, or what the speaker intended them to mean, but what liberals say are their coded meanings—cues sent by racists to reach other racists. Federalism now means “states’ rights,” which means the Confederacy; government spending means money taken from whites, and sent to black supplicants; crime means “Willie Horton,” the convicted killer whose unsupervised furlough, defended by Michael Dukakis, tipped the presidency in 1988 to the elder George Bush. Merely to bring up the issue of welfare reform is said to be a “dog whistle” or “racially charged.” It’s almost as if liberals assume most blacks are spongers or criminals, or think they aren’t troubled by assault and/or murder if the criminals are white like themselves.

Meanwhile, new words are constantly found to be racist, such as “golf,” used, according to MSNBC legend Lawrence O’Donnell, to link Obama to Tiger Woods, the mixed-race golf legend who lost his wife and his image in a personal meltdown; and “Chicago,” Obama’s headquarters and permanent residence, called out of bounds by O’Donnell’s colleague Chris Matthews because black people live in it. At this rate, the next words to be defined as racial dog whistles will be “and” and “the.”

Now, it surely is possible that racism may be more pervasive than some people

imagine, that millions of people have been tainted by it, and that some have sinister feelings which they fail to perceive. But it’s also possible that there are millions of people to whom race is normally a matter of indifference—and that their numbers are growing by the year. It’s happened before. In 1848, when the Irish came over, they were viewed by the WASPs with great trepidation, described as a lower species, and subject to a form of de facto apartheid. Yet the “First Irish Brahmin” was sworn in as president 52 years ago. When the Poles, Jews, and Italians came, they faced similar prejudice; Catholics, Jews, and Protestants viewed each other and each other’s religions with suspicion and fear. Bias prevailed, ambitions were thwarted, deserving people were kept out of the better schools, better jobs, and better neighborhoods. Time passed. The WASPs, Irish, Poles, and Jews got over each other. The Catholics, Jews, and Protestants got over each other, to the point that many white European Americans today are genetic concoctions of diverse sets of people who once were quite hostile



Can you hear the dog whistle?

tribes. It did not happen at once, and it did not happen completely, but it did happen, and the same process is now taking place between brown and black and white people. George H. W. Bush has grandchildren who are half-Mexican. Colin Powell has grandchildren who are half-white. In the end, the race problem will find its solution when enough people neither know nor care very much exactly which races they are.

Until then, some on the left will stay with this ship till it goes down completely, as their reasons for clinging are strong. First of all, it's a nice little racket, creating employment for sensitivity trainers, diversity counselors, race theory scholars, and other superfluous vendors of unneeded products. Second, it's fun for the Democrats, who like telling minorities that Republicans want to burn churches, lynch people, and otherwise see them in chains. Third, and perhaps most important, it's a self-esteem drug for a whole class of people, who seem to find their *raison d'être* in the belief that they are not only more cool and more hip than their opposition, but also more noble at heart. This is an addiction they aren't up to breaking and a habit they will not kick soon.

In the meantime, we must bear in mind that the liberals' racist fixation rests on illusions of various sorts. First is their theory that they alone among mortals have rare and evolved clairvoyant powers that allow them, perhaps like The Shadow, to look into other men's minds. But what they find in them is just what they put there: It was Maureen Dowd who heard the word "boy" when she thought of Obama; it was Timothy Noah who could not stop thinking, "He's black!" when he looked at Obama; it's the MSNBC people whose hearing is tuned to discern all the dog whistles. Who else besides Lawrence O'Donnell hears "PGA tour" as code for "deep-rooted white insecurities about black male sexuality" as Mark Steyn asked? To all of this there is one answer: Next time a liberal tells you he looked into your mind and found out you're a racist, tell him you looked into *his* mind and found out that he's nuts.

While claiming to see and to hear things that aren't there, liberals appear deaf and blind to things that are there, insisting Republicans are the party of angry old white men, frightened of change and modernity, obsessed with the loss of their status and power, who wage endless war upon immigrants, women, and blacks. Two things about this deserve further notice: that these diversity gains were Tea Party-driven and came from the most

maligned (and most conservative) wing of the party, and second, while Democrats draw more votes from blacks, Hispanics, and women (and have more delegates and more elected officials); the Republicans have far more state office holders, potential presidents, and future political stars. Liberals can call conservatives wrong on a number of issues, but they can't call them bigots. This is one case that is closed.

The race addicts are also hypocrites, and this gives the great game away. Their keen ears are deaf to a whole range of insults: No one hears dog whistles blow in the direction of black conservatives, black moderates, or any blacks (or Hispanics, or women) not wholly embraced by the left. No complaints came from the dog-whistle-industrial-complex when Clarence Thomas was portrayed as a lawn jockey, or Condi Rice depicted in cartoons by white and male liberals as a parrot, a pickaninny, and Prissy in *Gone With the*

Wind. No such complaints came a few months ago when Rep. Allen West was depicted in a campaign ad by his white opponent as sporting a gold tooth while beating a series of winsome blonde women.

For the perfect example of how this all works in practice, let us look to the transcript of *Hardball* for its program of August 15, just after the clean and articulate Vice President Biden had used a faux-Southern accent to tell a largely black audience that a Republican proposal

on financial regulations would "put y'all back in chains." The program was devoted to disputing the claim that the phrase "put y'all back in chains" was a slavery reference. "Is shackles any different than chains?" asked host Chris Matthews. "The Republicans . . . have been using the word 'shackled.' . . . Can you build a war, a civil war over that?" Guest Howard Fineman was eager to help him.

Certainly not, Fineman assured him. "Joe Biden was trying to be charming Joe Biden, and he made a mistake there, clearly. But the Romney campaign's motive in putting attention on it is not to cleanse the campaign of any racial reference, it's probably just the opposite. If they can stir up arguments about race . . . they're only too happy to do so." When Republicans complained about Biden's rhetoric they were "shining light on the race issue. You want to bring up race. You want to talk about it. If you didn't, you would have let it go."

Got it? When Joe Biden talks about slavery, it's proof that Republicans are race-baiting. This is how corrupt the Keep Race Alive movement has gotten. Treat it with the contempt it deserves. ♦

It was Maureen Dowd who heard the word 'boy' when she thought of Obama; it was Timothy Noah who could not stop thinking, 'He's black!' when he looked at Obama.



Comedy Isn't Pretty

The religulous journey of Bill Maher. BY CHARLOTTE ALLEN

Bill Maher's fans worship him. Some 4.1 million of them faithfully watch his *Real Time with Bill Maher*, whether at its 10 P.M. Friday time slot on HBO or in its on-demand and digital-recorder formats. Those are niche numbers compared with the weekly 14 million or so for ABC's *Dancing with the Stars* but still fairly impressive considering that Maher's show is on premium cable. Also, he aims for an audience that considers itself many cuts in sophistication above the "mouth-breathers," one of his favorite synonyms for the "rednecks" (another Maher *bon mot*) who take in mass-market network fare—and who vote Republican and go to church on Sunday, two other things that Maher can't stand.

Charlotte Allen is a contributing editor to the Manhattan Institute's *Minding the Campus* website.

Indeed, HBO has renewed *Real Time*, which wound up its tenth season in June, for another two years. Its season opener in August drew 1.9 million viewers when you count a replay at 11 P.M. (The numbers aren't in yet for Maher's Oct. 5 post-presidential-debate show, where he declared that Barack Obama had "sucked.") Studio audience members go crazy during Maher's hour-long combination of pundit and celebrity interviews, panel spar-offs, and monologues that veer between conventional standup and lengthy political editorials. They hoot, they cheer, they clap, they roar with appreciation.

But there is one thing that they almost never do: laugh.

This is strange, because Maher, 56, has been billing himself as a comedian since the 1970s. He started out in a New York comedy club, became a regular on *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson* and the *Late Show with David Letterman*,

then launched *Real Time*'s predecessor, *Politically Incorrect*, as a daily offering on Comedy Central in 1993, before switching to ABC in 1997. ABC dumped *Politically Incorrect* in 2002 after advertisers pulled out by the shipload because of a crack Maher made on Sept. 17, 2001, less than a week after the 9/11 massacre. Responding to President George W. Bush's description of the hijackers as "cowards," Maher quipped:

We have been the cowards, lobbing cruise missiles from two thousand miles away. That's cowardly. Staying in the airplane when it hits the building. Say what you want about it, it's not cowardly.

Fortunately for Maher, HBO doesn't have advertisers. Watch the YouTube video of that gag, and you will notice something else: Not a soul in the ABC studio audience that night emitted so much as a giggle.

EVERETT COLLECTION / NEWS.COM

Which points to another fact about Bill Maher: He's not very funny.

Here is a more recent sample of the less-than-funny wit of Bill Maher, from his capstone show on June 29 of this year, just before *Real Time* went on summer hiatus. Maher recommended that GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney pick George Zimmerman, slayer of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin during a sidewalk scuffle in Florida, as his running mate against President Obama. Quipped Maher: "Who better than George Zimmerman to personify your campaign theme of 'I think the black guy's up to no good?'"

Are you rolling in the aisle yet?

Sure, you might hear a few nervous chuckles at cracks like that, as Maher's studio sycophants gulp past their shock to demonstrate that they're as hip as their idol. But what you won't hear, what you almost never hear during an hour of Bill Maher, are the sustained and spontaneous audience bellylaughs that are the earmark of jokes that genuinely tickle the funny bone.

Here's another sample of Maher, from March 18, 2011, a week after a tsunami and the powerful earthquake that triggered it devastated much of northern Japan: "Sarah Palin finally heard what happened in Japan, and she's demanding that we invade Tsunami—I mean, she says that the Tsunamians will not get away with this." Maher pauses for laughs and gets . . . a handful of giggles.

Maher: Oh, and speaking of dumb twats, did you . . . ?

Audience: [gasps]

Maher: I let the cat out of the bag on that one, didn't I folks?

Audience: [ceiling-shattering applause, plus hoots and cheers]

The "dumb twats," by the way, was a lead-in to a Michele Bachmann joke: "Michele Bachmann is for those who find Sarah Palin too intellectual." (Maher has also regularly referred to Palin by the twat-synonym c-word in his touring standup act. He claims that it breaks up the audience every time.)

And how about this for yuks? Here's Maher's 2006 riff on the Heritage Foundation and other conservative

think tanks that supported the invasion of Iraq:

Maher: You can't call yourself a think tank if all your ideas are stupid . . .

Audience: [confused murmurs—*what's a think tank?*]

Maher: You know, it's a shame what happened to think tanks. They used to produce valuable apolitical analysis, but partisanship crept into many of them, and the Bush administration doesn't just come up with something as stupid as: If we leave now, they'll follow us home. No, they have someone from a think tank say it first. It's a way to lend respectability. The same reason a titty bar has food.

Audience: [dead silence]

This is supposed to be a comedy show? And yet, when that segment went up on YouTube, whoever uploaded it wrote, "Bill Maher is so funny on this one . . . that you have to take your hat off to him." Which leads to a second inescapable conclusion about Bill Maher: He's funny because his admirers—who include, among others, nearly all of the press—say he's funny. It's hard to find a published interview with Maher that doesn't slide down the greased chute from fawning to outright groveling.

Here is Kevin Manahan of Newark's *Star-Ledger* (Maher grew up in New Jersey), writing public-relations copy for his hero on May 17: "[H]e's a standup comedy star . . . he's making tens of millions of dollars eye-poking Rush Limbaugh, lampooning Fox News pundits and shaping American political thought on his HBO show, 'Real Time.' . . . Maher is one of the left's top pests mainly because his verbal noogies sting."

Manahan loved that Maher said on *Real Time* that Ann Romney "has never gotten her ass out of the house to work," and he coaxed Maher into characterizing the GOP candidate's wife as a bathrobe-clad couch potato of the kind who tells her children to "[s]hut the (heck) up" so she can take in another soap opera. Mike Ross of the *Edmonton Sun*, reviewing a July 6 performance by Maher in that city, was somewhat more detached, conceding that Maher's act was "one long liberal polemic" containing not "a single thing . . . that was in any way

controversial" to his Canadian fans, who seemed to be as smitten as his American fans. Nonetheless, Ross felt obliged to sum up Maher's shtick as "hilarious."

(A sample of the hilarity: "Mitt Romney is no Stephen Harper.")

However, it is *Rolling Stone*, where several extended interviews with Maher have appeared over the years, that walks away with the gold for journalistic obsequiousness. Here is one of the "questions" that *Rolling Stone* writer Tim Dickinson lobbed to Maher in 2011 as gently as the coach at a kindergarten tennis camp: "But even smart people don't seem to be connecting the dots—that the GOP's agenda is to finance tax cuts for the rich on the backs of the middle class." Was that a question or a keister kiss? Here's another: "Do you have any hope for us responding to global warming in a way that's meaningful?" And here's a third, as Dickinson yet again planted his lips on Maher's hindquarters: "You're prodigiously well informed on your show; is that a testament to your own news-junky-ness or the skill of your staff?"

Maher's "comedy" isn't really comedy at all; it's an exercise in confirmation bias. What is to be confirmed is Maher's (and by extension the audience members') intellectual and ideological superiority over the rest of us. Hence the large percentage of Maher "jokes" that amount to little more than calling someone stupid and waiting for the dutiful guffaws. The targets—Republicans, Southerners, and Americans in general—form a series of concentric conservative circles, with Sarah Palin as the bull's-eye. Maher's use of the word "stupid" and its variants and synonyms, such as "rubes" and "knuckle-draggers," is prodigious: "America is a stupid country with stupid people who don't pay attention"; "The dumbness is dragging us down"; "Toothless Tuesday" for the March 6 GOP primaries; Republicans as "mental patients."

In 2001, while *Politically Incorrect* was still on the air, the childless and never-wed (although reportedly linked romantically to dozens of women ranging from porn stars to—and it's unlikely that this rumor is true—Ann Coulter) Maher famously

likened retarded children to dogs. “They’re sweet. They’re loving. They’re kind. But they don’t mentally advance at all.”

Maheer directs his most sustained—and repetitive-to-the-point-of-tedium—barbs at religion, specifically Christianity (possibly because he was raised Roman Catholic until his teen years by his Irish father). Hence, “jokes” of this ilk: “At least half of the [Ten] Commandments are stupid,” or “We’re talking about a religion with a talking snake!” (Hasn’t that “talking snake” bit been rattling around on atheist websites for years?) Or how about this one:

You can’t be a rational person six days of the week and on one day of the week, go to a building and think you are drinking the blood of a two thousand-year-old space god. That doesn’t make you a person of faith. That makes you a schizophrenic.

In a June interview on *Real Time* with guest Ross Douthat, the conservative Catholic *New York Times* columnist and author of the recently published *Bad Religion: How We Became a Nation of Heretics*, Maheer quipped that religion “is by its very nature anti-intellectual.” His studio audience could hardly contain itself, hollering and clapping at this jest. One of Maheer’s oft-repeated historical fancies is that religion “causes most wars.” Whenever conservative guests on *Real Time* point out—as S. E. Cupp (an atheist, by the way) did in June—that actually the biggest bloodbaths of the 20th century were prompted by atheistic philosophies such as communism and Nazism, Maheer simply counters that those ideologies were “state religions.”

Um, isn’t “atheistic religion” an oxymoron?

Maheer’s hoped-for coup de grâce against faith was his 2008 documentary, *Religulous*, directed by Larry Charles, the director of *Borat*. Maheer, Charles, and their crew traversed America and elsewhere, telling lies in order to get interviews (as they later admitted), hiding Maheer’s involvement in the enterprise, and telling subjects that they were making a serious

feature to be called *A Spiritual Journey*. (One pastor they talked to said he had been under the impression that he was participating in a PBS show.)

Although *Religulous* featured a couple of swipes at Jews, Muslims, and Scientists, it was essentially about, well, how stupid (that word again!) Christians are. *Religulous* pokes fun at a guy who plays Jesus at the Holy Land Experience theme park in Orlando who can’t explain the theological doctrine of the Trinity very well. Also, a group of Missouri truck drivers who meet in the back of a semi to affirm their faith. Their interviews—consisting of such Maheer witticisms as “This man lived inside a fish for three days?”—are interspersed with clips of smart-aleck New Testament professors asserting that the Virgin Birth and other items of Christian belief are so much hokey.

Religulous winds up with a five-minute harangue by Maheer delivered at Tel Megiddo in Israel—a site that is identified with Armageddon in the Book of Revelation, where good and evil are prophesied to do battle at the end of time. Against a background of vintage clips of nuclear mushroom clouds and other havoc supposedly prompted by the Bible, Maheer pours it on: “Faith means making a virtue out of not thinking. . . . This is why rational people, antireligionists, need to come out of the closet and assert themselves.”

Religulous scraped together about \$13 million in box-office revenues, which made it the highest-grossing documentary of 2008. Of course the competition that year wasn’t exactly boffo: *Glass: A Portrait of Philip in Twelve Parts*, exploring the raindrops-on-the-roof oeuvre of the avant-garde composer; *The Garden*, about people growing vegetables in a community garden in South Central Los Angeles; and *Fuel*, a diatribe against America’s addiction to oil. Had Dinesh D’Souza’s *2016: Obama’s America*—which has taken in \$33 million since its release earlier this year—been in the running, *Religulous*’s claims to blockbuster status would have looked as fatuous as the Holy Land Experience. Still, Maheer was incensed that *Religulous* wasn’t nominated for an Academy Award. But *Garden* was nominated—

perhaps due to Michelle Obama-fueled community-garden chic—and the Oscar went to the British documentary *Man on Wire*, chronicling Philippe Petit’s high-wire walk between the World Trade Center’s twin towers in 1974.

“We weren’t even considered,” Maheer griped to *Rolling Stone*’s Dickinson. “Of all the bodies that are irrelevant, the documentary division of the Oscars has to be close to the top of the list.” That was three years after *Religulous*’s release. This year he was still at it. In a January segment of *Real Time*, Maheer defended the Stop Online Piracy Act (even though Congress had already shelved the bill) on the grounds that Internet users were illegally downloading copies of *Religulous* instead of paying for them. The blogger Ace of Spades quipped: “Bill Maheer has millions of fans who think he’s hilarious. It just turns out that they’re all dicks.”

This leads to a third fact about Maheer: He is exceedingly thin-skinned, and he never seems to forget a slight, real or imagined. In *Religulous*, he complains for no apparent reason that no one had told him until he reached age 13 that his mother was Jewish. (Her maiden name is Berman—couldn’t he have guessed?) In 2006, he was still licking his wounds over the fact that no one had chuckled at his 9/11 one-liner about cowardice. In an op-ed piece for the *Los Angeles Times* marking the fifth anniversary of 9/11, he scolded America for its deficient sense of humor in the wake of the massacre. “When is the right time to make jokes about it, and what kind of jokes can you make?”

Maheer’s title for his piece, incidentally, was “When Can We Finally Be Funny Again?” Picking the scab, and getting in a dig at ABC for firing him, he explained that when he had said “we” on that fatal night, he had really meant “American society as a whole,” but “it was not hard for people who never liked me to begin with to pretend that I was calling the military cowardly. I wasn’t.” He was still picking the scab during his inaugural show for this season on August 31. Maheer complained to guest Dinesh D’Souza that “the White House” under George W. Bush had “kept the heat on” him, forcing ABC to cancel his show.

In April 2011, Maher flew into a Twitter rage over an *Onion* tweet made shortly after President Obama produced his birth certificate proving that he had been born in Hawaii: “Afterbirths Demand To See Obama’s Placenta.” An hour later Maher angrily tweeted: “I see The Onion stole my placenta joke that I did in Feb 2010 HBO special.” It turned out that the joke-theft was likely the other way around: The *Onion* had actually published the quip in August 2009 and was recycling it by way of a link that Maher, in his snit, had apparently neglected to click. The *Onion*’s then-features editor Joe Garden tweeted: “Bill? We don’t watch your show.”

Occasionally, Maher’s brand of humor manages to offend even the most dedicated admirers. After his “dumb twats” crack about Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann in March 2011, the National Organization for Women (NOW) and the Women’s Media Center finally decided they had had it. NOW communications director

Lisa Bennett wrote a blog entry on March 22 telling “supposedly progressive men”: “Cut the crap! Stop degrading women with whom you disagree and/or don’t like by using female body terms.” Women’s Media Center spokesman Yana Walton said, “Bill Maher’s misogynistic comment about Sarah Palin hurts all women.”

None of this seemed to faze Maher. By June 24, 2011, on *Real Time*, he was going after the Palins again, sniping that daughter Bristol Palin’s memoir, *Not Afraid of Life*, with its recounting of her 2008 out-of-wedlock pregnancy with her son, should have been titled “*Whoops, There’s a Dick in Me*”: “Oh, the Palins, I tell you—the sh-t doesn’t fall far from the bat.” For good measure, Maher called Bristol’s mother Sarah a “ditzzy beauty queen” with “uninformed opinions.” On September 23, 2011, he referred to Fox News anchor Megyn Kelly as “the blonde

twink.” He waited for an audience reaction, got a couple of nervous titters, and then added, “I’m sorry—I meant Madame Curie.” One of Maher’s liberal guests, Jane Harman, a former Democratic congresswoman and also a blonde, jumped on Maher about the “blonde twink” comment.

“It’s not because she’s a woman,” replied Maher. “It’s because she’s dumb.” (Megyn Kelly is a graduate of Syracuse and the Albany Law School, where she edited the law review.)



Seth (*Family Guy*) MacFarlane, honoree Bill Maher, and Larry King on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, 2010

Maher’s strategic response to accusations of sexism has been to: (1) blame Fox News, which is what he told *Rolling Stone*’s Dickinson; (2) invoke the First Amendment’s free-speech protections (what he told ABC News’s Jake Tapper in a March interview in which Tapper asked Maher to distinguish between his using “c—” in reference to Sarah Palin and Rush Limbaugh’s calling free birth-control advocate Sandra Fluke a “slut”); (3) maintain that Palin deserves it because she is “a public figure” who “gives as good as she gets”; (4) point to the artistry of comedy, in which the c-word is part of “a carefully crafted routine” that generated “one of the biggest laughs in my act” (Maher to Tapper and Dickinson); (5) insist that the c-word is actually gender-neutral and can be used with reference to either sex (Maher to Dickinson: “It’s a word that talks about a specific type of person—and it can be a man or a woman”);

(6) blame the vast right-wing conspiracy (Maher to Tapper: “In general, this is an obvious right-wing attempt to dredge up some old sh-t about me to deflect from their self-inflicted problems”).

The strange thing about Bill Maher is that he clearly once was, and still can be, genuinely funny. As Maher himself has pointed out, standup may be the most brutally demanding of entertainment forms, in which audiences exhibit no patience with comedians who cannot make them roll on the floor. Maher, along with hosting his television shows, has spent more than 30 years on a bare stage with a microphone doing improv. And you can still occasionally see flashes of his comedic talent on *Real Time*. Here’s a sample from one of Maher’s running-gags, “New Rules”:

If you’re buying your cat the new Fancy Feast appetizers, you’re not pampering her. You’re dating her. And while you’re trying to decide between the tilapia and the wild Alaskan salmon, she’s eating a dead bird.

Now, that was funny. So was the skit he did on June 3, 2011, in which he and *Glee* star Jane Lynch read aloud, deadpan, the text of one of the graphic Facebook sex chats that former New York Democratic representative Anthony Weiner exchanged with Las Vegas blackjack dealer Lisa Weiss. (I’m not being partisan here; I would have laughed just as uproariously had the perp in question been, say, Newt Gingrich.) Many of Maher’s tweets, even his political ones, display an inventive and good-humored (if often left-leaning) merriment mostly missing in the heavy-handed audience-pandering on *Real Time*.

Here’s a tweet from June: “Obama press conf today said Congress shld be more bipartisan. Palin: ‘No way congress shld be having sex with men and women! N-U spells NO!’” Maher’s respect for fellow practitioners of bare-stage routines undoubtedly underlay his quixotic kudos to Clint Eastwood’s

empty-chair routine at the Republican convention: “[H]e ... *killed*,” Maher said. That’s the highest praise that one comedian can pay to another.

Mocking Obama’s performance against Mormon opponent Mitt Romney at the October 3 debate, Maher said, “Obama looked so dead, Romney tried to baptize him.” When the studio audience groaned its rare displeasure because Maher had tweaked its White House idol, Maher chided, “You f—ing liberals, let me tell you something—you gotta get on the reality page.”

It may be hard to believe this from the man who plans to stump for the Democrats with a series of preelection concerts on campuses, and who donated \$1 million to Priorities USA Action (that’s the super-PAC that ran the ad accusing Mitt Romney of making a woman die of cancer), but Maher once identified with the Republican party, albeit its libertarian wing. He was genuinely politically incorrect.

“I like the Barry Goldwater Republican party, even the Reagan Republican party,” he told *Rolling Stone* in 1999. “I want a mean old man to watch my money. I don’t want a Republican to be funny. I don’t want him to be charming. Because government is a sieve that takes as much money as it can and gives it away, usually needlessly.” Compare that with the Maher of 2012, who used a February segment on *Real Time* to dress down conservatives such as Arizona’s GOP governor, Janice Brewer, for daring to “disrespect” President Obama.

At some point in the history of standup comedy—and maybe it began with Maher’s hero, George Carlin—certain comedians who had once been genuinely funny, as Carlin was early in his career, decided that the point of their routines was not to generate laughs but to vent political rage to the like-minded. The Carlin curse has afflicted an entire generation of liberal-activist comics, rendering them deadly: Al Franken, Janeane Garofalo, Margaret Cho, to name a few. Their “humor” goes by the sobriquet “edgy,” which is a shorthand way of saying “preaching to the leftist choir.”

Maher likes to tell the story of how,

when he was 13, his father stopped taking the family to Sunday Mass because he didn’t like the Catholic church’s position on birth control. There is an irony there because in some ways Maher is a Catholic priest *manqué*. Like Catholic priests, he has taken a vow never to marry, and he uses his stage

appearances essentially as a pulpit, except that the sermons rail not against sin but against conservatives, the evils of religion, or whatever else.

In Maher’s church, as in all churches, you’ll see plenty of devoted and enthusiastic worshippers. But you won’t hear many laughs. ♦

BCA

The Wonder Man

A second opinion on Mozart’s final days.

BY JOHN CHECK

Discussions of what would prove to be Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s last years tend to fixate on his death. Much talk there is—for Christoph Wolff, too much talk—of Mozart’s decline or fall, of the quality of resignation that supposedly crept into his music, even of the “autumnal world” that his late work is said to inhabit.

In contrast, Wolff, Adams University Professor at Harvard, is concerned with Mozart’s life—with his ambitious composition program and fervid assimilation of technique, the zeal with which he approached new projects and pursued his dream of acquiring distinction. Such emphasis on futurity endows this short yet altogether serious book with refreshing buoyancy.

During the last four years of his life (1788-1791), Mozart served the emperor of Austria as a court composer. Two compellingly drawn figures from that time are introduced in the first chapter: the emperor himself, the music-loving Joseph II, and the composer Antonio Salieri. As for the latter, he is very far from the envious hack made infamous by *Amadeus* (1984). A skilled composer, and one Mozart genuinely admired, Salieri was also a man with a talent for administration. It was Salieri whom the emperor entrusted with the position of

John Check teaches music theory at the University of Central Missouri.

Mozart at the Gateway to His Fortune
Serving the Emperor, 1788-1791
by Christoph Wolff
Norton, 272 pp. \$27.95

court Kapellmeister, which had onerous everyday responsibilities. Mozart, meanwhile, received an appointment (as a composer and chamber musician) that included few actual responsibilities, allowing him the leisure to compose. The emperor showed himself to be a good judge of both Salieri’s temperament and Mozart’s genius. And there was no greater admirer of Mozart’s genius than Antonio Salieri.

Wolff quotes from a letter written by Mozart less than two months before his death. The two composers had recently attended a performance of Mozart’s opera *The Magic Flute*:

Salieri listened and watched with great attention, and from the overture all the way through to the final chorus there was not a single number that did not elicit from him a “bravo” or “bello.”

Mozart’s position also allowed him time to branch out from Vienna and spread his reputation. In Frankfurt, he presented a number of concerts to drum up interest in his new work. In Leipzig, he gave a three-hour concert to showcase his versatility and virtuosity as a composer, conductor, and pianist.

Unfortunately, the concert was more successful musically than financially, owing to characteristically inadequate planning on his part. About his stay in Berlin, little can be known for certain, but it likely saw Mozart taking in a number of concerts, meeting musicians of all sorts, and visiting some of the city's salons, especially that of Sara Levy, in Wolff's words, "a truly pivotal figure in the emerging bourgeois culture of the Prussian capital."

Scattered throughout the book are details that help convey something of the flavor of everyday life in what it would not be going too far to call the Age of Mozart. One table provided by Wolff itemizes the salaries of Mozart and other imperial musicians, while another lists the addresses where he lived and how much he paid in rent; an appendix shows what, at the time, money could buy, whether a loaf of bread at six kreuzer or, for twice that amount, a music lesson with Leopold Mozart, the composer's father. (The son charged 10 times as much as his father.) Mozart's lavish spending habits are also set out. There is even an excursus on the subject of his deformed ears, which, according to some scholars, suggested he had trouble with his kidneys.

Wolff is at his best when describing the structure and context of individual works, ranging from the slight but well-wrought Gigue in G major (K. 547) to more extensive ones, among them the last three symphonies (39-41), *The Magic Flute*, and the unfinished *Requiem*. Wolff's treatment of the Piano Sonata in F major (K. 533) is especially fine: This work, he writes, "represented Mozart's first and only piano sonata that featured imitative polyphony from the very start." (Imitation refers to the repetition of a melodic idea in another voice; polyphony, quite literally, to music written for many voices or parts.) In the case of the first movement, the pianist first plays an idea using high notes in the right hand, then using low notes in the left hand. In the recording I have, Daniel Barenboim's EMI release (1985), the left-hand imitation begins at the 0:11 mark. Not only is imitative polyphony used at the beginning, it

returns, often prominently, throughout the remainder of the movement.

For seven pages, Wolff discusses the context of this "ambitious" and "extraordinarily sophisticated" sonata, whose technical demands, he holds, were "without parallel." Why did Mozart write it as he did? Part of the reason had to do with his conception of himself as an artist: He wanted to be taken with the utmost seriousness. Celebrated as a *wunderkind* piano virtuoso, Mozart wanted, in Wolff's view, to prove that he had grown up and mastered the craft of musical composition



in its full complexity. Such mastery necessitated absolute fluency in the polyphonic techniques that were a hallmark of the work of earlier composers, J. S. Bach chief among them.

But there appears to be another reason why Mozart wrote this sonata when he did and as he did. He wanted to please his boss: "The composer knew well that Joseph II was especially fond of the strict polyphonic style, not only in church music but also in instrumental works." Equipped with training in music, reasonably proficient as a keyboardist, and proud of the composer in his employ, the emperor would have realized, within a matter of measures, that Mozart in this sonata was up to something out of the ordinary—and, one assumes, he would have been deeply flattered by the appeal to his aesthetic sensibility.

Given that the first movement of the K. 533 was such a stylistic departure

for Mozart, it is somewhat striking that he should have appropriated a previously written work, a rondo (K. 494), for the third and final movement. Interesting, too, how he modified the rondo to bring it into stylistic agreement with the opening movement. Chiefly, he inserted a newly composed section near its end marked by the energetic use of imitative polyphony. The original K. 494, in Mozart's judgment, must have lacked sufficient heft for it to serve as the finale to his big sonata; something was needed to lend it greater weight, greater moment. This is exactly what the insertion provides.

Mozart's forward-looking nature is ably demonstrated in Wolff's discussion of two works from the composer's last year. *The Magic Flute*, he insists, was not so much an ending as a beginning:

From the perspective of a completed oeuvre, it seems natural to view [it] . . . as a culmination or even the teleological goal of a line of development rather than a conscious fresh start. Yet, when Mozart conceived the work, he definitely had his eye fixed on the future—albeit a future whose artistic progress and end eludes any speculation.

As for the *Requiem*, Mozart seems to have welcomed its commission, viewing it as an opportunity to compose the kind of sacred music he felt sure he would be called upon to write once he had obtained a more influential position. It was not to be.

While Wolff's writing is clear, a knotty sentence here and there calls for untangling. (Wolff's first language is German.) Academic locutions appear, but in pardonable number. The few genuine lapses stand out all the more because they are so rare: the use of "valedictorian" when "valedictory" would have been better; the use of "politically correct" when the less charged "politic" seems to have been intended. The book contains little in the way of musical examples set out in notation, always off-putting to readers without musical training.

Mozartians—a category that includes nearly everyone who loves serious music—will profit immensely from Christoph Wolff's splendid book. ♦

The Lady Is a Lamp

What you don't know about the Statue of Liberty.

BY EMILY SCHULTHEIS



Ronald Reagan campaigns for president, 1980.

“Slowly the ship glides into the harbor,” wrote one turn-of-the-century immigrant of arriving in New York, “and when it passes under the shadow of the Statue of Liberty, the silence is broken, and a thousand hands are outstretched in a greeting to this new divinity to whose keeping they now entrust themselves. ‘Oh Papa,’ cried one young girl, ‘the goddess has waded into the water to meet us!’”

This popular image of the Statue of Liberty as the “Mother of Exiles” who (in the words of Emma Lazarus) beckons, *Give me your tired, your poor / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free*, was not what the Frenchmen behind the project originally intended. In fact, the meaning of Lady Liberty has been remarkably flexible since she made her first appearance in the mid-

Emily Schultheis is an assistant editor at National Affairs.

The Statue of Liberty
A Transatlantic Story
 by Edward Berenson
 Yale, 248 pp., \$25

1870s. The evolution of her significance is one of the many stories told here by Edward Berenson.

Berenson, who teaches French history at New York University, traces the development of Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi’s universally recognized “Liberty Enlightening the World” from the financing of the statue and her base to the ideals she has represented to her image in the popular mind.

The idea first emerged in 1865 at a gathering of French intellectuals mourning the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, whom they adored for his opposition to slavery. Napoleon III had aided the Confederacy during the war, however, and these Frenchmen wanted to give the reunited American

states a symbolic gift to solidify their relationship and celebrate the common ground—a love of liberty—shared by the two countries.

They concluded that only a colossus would do to convey an idea as vast and important as liberty. To support the statue from the inside, they recruited Gustave Eiffel (later of Tower fame) to build a skeleton—a flexible, 132-ton tower on which Lady Liberty’s wafer-thin exterior hangs. The exterior itself, though only 3/32 of an inch thick, weighs 88 tons.

Contrary to popular belief, the statue was not a gift from the French government to the American government. In fact and in spirit, she was an offering from the French people to the American citizenry, and the funds for the statue and her base were raised almost entirely from private individuals on both sides of the Atlantic.

Indeed, to raise funds, Bartholdi had to be creative, and Berenson found that souvenirs of the Statue of Liberty—so ubiquitous in tourist shops around New York today—actually date from well before the statue was completed. Postcards, lithographs, and miniature figures of all sizes were sold to raise money to finish the project.

Interestingly, Bartholdi and his team discovered that tourists would pay to explore the inside of the statue before she was finished. So they sold tickets to climb inside the arm and torch when they were displayed at the 1876 centennial exhibition in Philadelphia, and did the same when Lady Liberty’s head was displayed at the Paris International Exposition in 1878 on the Champ de Mars—where Eiffel’s famous tower would go up 11 years later.

Rudyard Kipling wrote about his visit to Liberty’s head in his *Souvenirs of France*:

One ascended by a staircase to the dome of the skull and looked out through vacant eyeballs at a bright colored world beneath. I climbed up there often, and an elderly Frenchman said to me, “Now you young Englisher, you can say you have looked through the eyes of Liberty Herself.”

For their part, the American recipients took on the job of raising

funds for the statue, as well as designing and building the base—a massive undertaking in itself, given the magnitude of Lady Liberty. Though repeatedly petitioned for funds, the robber barons and great families of New York City were not eager to contribute. However, Joseph Pulitzer of the *New York World* was a champion of the project and organized a brilliant campaign to raise funds through small donations from readers: Dimes, quarters, and dollars poured in from ordinary Americans, giving them all a stake in the statue. Ultimately, more than 121,000 people donated \$102,000—one-third of the amount needed for the pedestal.

The statue's first home was Paris, where she was assembled in 1883 amidst Baron Haussmann's grand new boulevards. In 1884, Victor Hugo visited the statue in Paris on what was to be the last outing of his life, writing: "I have been to see Bartholdi's colossal . . . statue for America. . . . It is superb. When I saw the statue I said: 'The sea, that great tempestuous force, bears witness to the union of two great peaceful lands.'"

The people of Paris fell so in love with the statue that Bartholdi ultimately produced a scaled-down replica that now stands on a small island in the Seine. The original was disassembled, placed into 212 crates, and sent to Bedloe's Island, where the crates sat unopened for nearly a year while the pedestal was completed. Once the statue was reassembled, a massive inaugural parade was arranged in 1886.

As part of an Art Loan Exhibition to raise money for the pedestal in 1883, Emma Lazarus wrote "The New Colossus," which, 20 years later, would be engraved on a bronze plaque hung at the base of the statue. However, the poem did not become so well known until the 1930s, when Liberty's symbolism as a welcoming "mother" to immigrants was established.

It is Lady Liberty's "symbolic malleability" that Berenson takes up in the second half of his book, and this makes his contribution to her history different. Before she became a symbol of welcome to newcomers,

Americans saw her as a symbol of opposition to immigration. The massive influx of immigrants around the turn of the 20th century caused tension with native-born Americans. In the decades before the Civil War, the United States saw an average of 125,000 immigrants a year; by 1880, half a million people every year were coming to our shores. Between the end of the Civil War in 1865 and 1900, 13.3 million immigrants arrived in the United States, and another 13 million or so arrived in the years leading up to World War I.

This flood of newcomers began around the same time as the economic crises of the 1870s and '80s, as manufacturing jobs were rapidly expanding and unions were striking. The new working class became overwhelmingly immigrant, causing complicated class and cultural conflicts with their native-born managers.

It was during this time of economic dislocation and tumult that the Statue of Liberty became associated with immigrants, since most European vessels arrived in New York Harbor. Between 1890 and 1924, the reception facility on Ellis Island (next door to Lady Liberty) processed more than 12 million immigrants—the current populations of New York City and Los Angeles combined.

Having arrived in New York Harbor, immigrants who had achieved success "began to see the Statue of Liberty as an emblem of their good fortune," writes Berenson. But it was not until the First World War, when Liberty's image was used to recruit newcomers to the American cause, that she began to take on a more positive meaning. And not until the 1930s, when the largest waves of immigrants had ceased, "did the American public at large come to see the Statue of Liberty as the symbol of immigration and to regard that symbolism in a largely positive light."

It was in this environment that Lazarus's poem took hold as the overarching characterization of the "Mother of Exiles." Berenson notes that, in the context of Jewish immigrants fleeing Hitler on the eve of World War II,

sympathy for the plight of immigrants in general became more widespread, and the experience of World War II made America a welcoming "melting pot" of cultures.

In fact, by 1956, the immigrant experience had become so universal that Congress approved a plan for an immigration museum at the base of the Statue of Liberty, and renamed her island perch Liberty Island. But assembling an immigration museum on the eve of the Age of Aquarius turned out to be too contentious a proposition, and there was a public outcry against putting such a controversial site at the foot of a beloved icon. In 1965, Lyndon Johnson proclaimed that Ellis Island would host the immigration museum, separating Bartholdi's colossus from the culture debates, and allowing her to take up the abstract mantle of liberty once more.

Berenson includes an entertaining chapter on the ways in which the Statue of Liberty has been used in advertisements, film, television, and popular culture. Her likeness has been used to sell everything from cigarettes to World War I Liberty Loans, the latter asking contributors to "Remember Your First Thrill of American Liberty." Her versatility stems not only from her universal popularity, writes Berenson, but also her "status as a 'hollow icon,' open to almost any meaning, [allowing] her to stand just as easily for peace as for war." She has been a popular cultural symbol for the better part of a century: Irving Berlin wrote an entire Broadway musical about her in 1949, and she has made appearances in a wide variety of Hollywood films, even coming alive to save New York in *Ghostbusters II*.

Berenson details the complicated 1986 restoration (including new rivets precovered with Liberty's signature green patina to avoid a polka-dot look), completed in time for her centennial, for which New York hosted a four-day party. On the occasion, Paul Goldberger described her in the *New York Times* as a "gesture of welcoming. . . . This great figure standing at the edge pulls New York together [and gives] the city an anchor. . . . The city that is too large and too busy to stop for anyone seems, through this statue, to stop for everyone." ♦

The Kids Are Alright

And maybe the target should be their parents.

BY ZACK MUNSON

I'm going to go out on a limb and say that blogging is not the greatest byproduct of the advent of the information age. (That would be Double Rainbow Guy. Easily.) But it's not the worst, either (acronyms, Rick Astley, Facebook, take your pick). Over the years, I've spent some time reading blogs, usually when I had something else I was supposed to be doing, and I've enjoyed my time learning about Stuff White People Like and cats that look like Hitler, among other things.

So I was intrigued when I heard about a snarky, faux-celebrity gossip blog written from the perspective of Suri Cruise, the 6-year-old daughter of erstwhile match-made-in-heaven Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes. With Tom Cruise being crazy, the sham marriage, the whole Scientology thing: It sounded kind of funny.

Suri's Burn Book, written by Allie Hagan, a policy analyst in Washington, debuted in July 2011 and, within a short time, was a hit—or whatever it's called when a blog succeeds at doing whatever blogs do. After just a few weeks online it was even named *Time's* Tumblr of the Week. (Other recipients: *Mutant Ninja Noses* and *Animals with Stuffed Animals*. This is an honor not lightly awarded.) Ultimately, Hagan got a book deal, and last month, *Suri's Burn Book* (the actual book) was released.

But there's a problem. *Suri's Burn Book* is not funny, as a book or a blog. Hagan's Suri is a pampered, moody Hollywood snob, quick to be jealous and resentful of other celebrity offspring who might steal some of her spotlight. The posts on the blog feature Suri's commentary on photos of celebrities with their sometimes oddly dressed

Zack Munson is a writer in Hollywood.

Suri's Burn Book
Well-Dressed Commentary
from Hollywood's Little Sweetheart
by Allie Hagan
Running Press, 128 pp., \$12.95

and often oddly named children in tow.

Hagan has tried to create a little world for her Suri character to occupy: an on-again/off-again romance with Cruz Beckham, son of David and Victoria; a rivalry with Willow Smith, daughter of the Fresh Prince; a running disgust with Violet Affleck and her parents. But her jokes are, simply put, lame. "Seeing a wealthy person going barefoot in a Target is as unsettling as that time Vanessa Hudgens got invited to the Oscars," she declares about January Jones's son, Xander.

On the announcement that Vivienne Jolie-Pitt is going to play a young Sleeping Beauty in an upcoming film, Suri crows, "Watching a Jolie-Pitt try to play someone (A) beautiful and (B) capable of lying still for long periods of time is going to be hilarious." And about a recent shot of Blue Ivy Carter and her father, Jay-Z, Suri quips, "Going barefoot in Paris is like showing up to the Oscars in a denim miniskirt." (Hmm, that sounds familiar.)

Like a lot—not all, but a lot—of the self-published humor on the Internet, *Suri's Burn Book* blog's primary virtue is not that it's actually funny, but that it's available, *now*, when you want to spend a few minutes avoiding what you're supposed to be doing at work. It never really generates any laughter, and it doesn't need to. It just needs to distract.

And it's a form that is particularly ill-suited to full-length book adaptation. With chapters on weird celebrity baby names, old money versus new money,

and celebrity child fashion, Hagan's commentary is just a long-form version of her blog: snarky without being clever, silly, absurd, or funny in any of the other ways people can be funny.

"I've been criticized for carrying expensive handbags at such a young age," she writes. "But what do you expect me to do? Put my American Express black card in my pocket?" Ha ha. "Messy hair and menswear are Shiloh Jolie-Pitt's most well-known features." Zing. "Try as they may, [Will Smith and Jada Pinkett Smith] will never succeed at thrusting greatness or talent upon their children, and all you need is one slumber party at Willow's house to know that she is not that special." LULZ.

There's one more thing to remember: These are kids she's talking about. Suri Cruise is 6 years old. Willow Smith is 11. Blue Ivy Carter is less than a year old. Hagan claims her satirical target is their parents; as she told the *Washington Post*, "I'm trying to poke fun at how [their parents] trot them out."

As someone who makes a living making fun of people, I'm sympathetic to her aim. But however obnoxious these celebrity parents may be, however much they may have exploited the birth of their children for money or notoriety, Hagan is still taking aim at the kids—and exploiting them for money and notoriety.

In that same interview, the *Post* quotes an online conversation Hagan had with a friend just before starting the blog: "Omgggg that is exactly the kind of thing I want to post—honest truths about these privileged children. LIKE THAT THEY ARE BORING." Is this really necessary? Do these kids really need some 25-year-old with a master's degree going after them for her own (or anybody else's) amusement?

Were Hagan to point some real satire at these kids' parents, or the fans who obsess over them, and were she to do so in a way that is actually clever and funny, she might be forgiven for commandeering the identity of a little girl who had the bad fortune to be famous before she was even born. Until then, I'll just have to find some other way to make it through the workday. ♦

Harmónious

Young love and young standards sound good.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

The fizzy and exuberant cinematic confection called *Pitch Perfect* fits its title. This broad comedy about collegiate a cappella groups—made up of 8 or 10 kids who sing entirely without accompaniment and use their voices as their instruments—manages to be amusingly cartoonish and sweetly heartfelt at the same time.

The movie takes the name of Mickey Rapkin's 2008 nonfiction book and a few facts from it—girl groups have a disadvantage with competition judges because while men can sing falsetto, women cannot do the same with a bass line—but is otherwise entirely a fictional invention.

We follow the progress of one such girl group, the Barden Bellas, as they attempt to recover from a disaster that occurs during the national finals at Lincoln Center, the scene that opens the movie. Aubrey, their very driven leader—"my dad always says, if you're not here to win, get the hell out of Kuwait"—is wound so tight that she literally loses her lunch as she hits the high note of her solo.

The following fall at Barden University, the Bellas are trying to recruit new talent so they can make it back to the finals and defeat their nemesis, the prize-winning all-male Treblemakers. The signature of the Bellas is that they dress like 1960s stewardesses and all have hot "bikini-ready bods." But Aubrey's freakout (with 200,000 hits on YouTube) has so damaged the group's reputation that she is forced to accept anyone who will join. The new Bellas include a young Asian woman who looks like an anime character and doesn't speak above a whisper; a sex-

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, is THE WEEKLY STANDARD's movie critic.

Pitch Perfect
Directed by Jason Moore



Anna Kendrick as Beca

crazed ballerina; an African-American lesbian addicted to gambling; and a blowsy Tasmanian import who calls herself "Fat Amy" so that "twig bitches like you don't do it behind my back."

The movie's protagonist is Beca (Anna Kendrick of *Up in the Air*), a cynical loner who only joins the Bellas at the behest of her professor father. *Pitch Perfect* is about how Beca, crushed by her parents' terrible divorce, slowly thaws and finds friendship and purpose by joining up with the Bellas and falling for Jesse, a rival Treblemaker.

But screenwriter Kay Cannon and director Jason Moore, both of whom make sensational big screen debuts with this movie, never let the proceedings get too heavy or *Afterschool Special-y*. *Pitch Perfect* has the wild highs of a 1980s John Hughes movie (which it deliberately invokes with a shout-out to *The Breakfast Club*) while avoiding Hughes's propensity to flatter his teen audience's overwrought pretensions and pseudo-angst. Cannon and

Moore keep a satirical distance from the world they're portraying.

The Treblemakers, we're told, are the superstars of a cappella, but they're still just socially hapless kids with wannabe hip-hop dance moves. (We get a glimpse of what their future is likely to be when three potbellied, T-shirted veterans in their forties show up at a competition to relive their glory days and try to get into a sing-off.) And yet, when they or the Bellas start to sing, the effect is infectious, cheering, and even quite moving.

Kendrick is terrific in what you might call the distaff Judd Nelson role here, as is Skylar Astin, who plays her love interest, Jesse. Both of them are Broadway veterans: Kendrick was rightly nominated for a Tony when she appeared in an otherwise awful stage version of the Cole Porter movie-musical *High Society*; Astin starred in the Tony-winning musical *Spring Awakening*. When they sing (as when they don't sing), they are both winning and remarkably without affect; they are what keeps the movie minimally grounded in reality.

But the breakout performance—and the one that best reflects this movie's amazing balancing act between the satirical and the celebratory—is by Anna Camp, previously unknown to me. As the gorgeous and determined Aubrey, Camp somehow manages to find the humanity in a character who speaks in ludicrous clichés and might, in lesser hands, have come across as a plastic, type-A, control-freak monster.

That descent into feeble caricature could have been true of *Pitch Perfect* as a whole, since it has indeed been the fatal flaw of *Glee*, the television show whose success made this film possible. But while *Pitch Perfect* follows in the footsteps of *Glee*'s undeniably thrilling use of mashups of contemporary songs warbled by vibrant young musical talents, it does not have that show's toxic sense of disdain for its own characters—or its repugnant misogyny. *Pitch Perfect* is not a great movie by any means: It has too many dangling plotlines, for one thing, and it's just a mite too silly. But it's great fun, and that's more than enough. ♦

“Again mocking Mitt Romney for his proposal to cut public television, Obama added some riffs about the fate of some Sesame Street characters. ‘Elmo has been seen in a white Suburban!’ Obama told donors in San Francisco. ‘He’s driving for the border!’”

—USA Today, October 9, 2012

PARODY

OCTOBER 14, 2013

ONE DOLLAR CHEAP

ELMO CLEARED OF MURDER, VOWS TO FIND ‘REAL KILLER’

Muppet Acquitted of All Charges in Death of Co-Star

By DEAN E. MURPHY AND
CAROLYN MARSHALL

SESAME STREET—The crime story that scandalized one of America’s elite neighborhoods—the cold-blooded killing of the beloved children’s television star Big Bird—took a dramatic turn Monday with the unexpected acquittal of co-star Elmo on all charges.

Since Elmo’s daring, high-speed car chase to the border shortly after he was announced as a suspect, Americans have followed the criminal investigation and ensuing trial obsessively. For many, the nationally televised attempt to flee justice was sufficient evidence of the muppet’s guilt. Evidence presented at trial also tied Elmo to the crime, including the testimony of FBI forensic expert Dr. Bunsen Honeydew, who said a pair of gloves found near the crime scene in a pile of the victim’s feathers contained red fibers that were a 99.9 percent match with Elmo’s fur.

However, the trial also touched on many social issues that have long rent the fabric of American society. Elmo’s lawyer, The Count, known for his exotic sartorial choices and aristocratic bearing, repeatedly suggested that anti-Muppet bias had tainted the investigation.

The Count also raised doubts about the key evidence linking the defendant to the murder. The cashmere-lined, dark-brown leather gloves had five long fingers, compared with Elmo’s four short, stubby digits.



Elmo on the links following his release.

In an unorthodox bit of courtroom theater, The Count drove the point home by first making the jury box count aloud with him to the number four and then making them count to five. He then famously told the jury of the evidence, “If it’s more than four, you must ignore.”

The months-long trial also featured a colorful cast of witnesses, including one Oscar the Grouch, who was residing in a trashcan behind Elmo’s pool house at the time the crime occurred. While Mr. Grouch was emphatic about being left alone and appeared at the trial only because he was legally compelled, his testimony did suggest that Elmo was emotionally unbalanced.

“Look, he ranted about about President Romney and the Republican Congress ending PBS’s subsidy all the time,” he told the jury. “He wasn’t happy with Sesame Street’s new management at Nickelodeon and constantly whined in that squeaky voice of his about the demise of PBS. Said he didn’t want to live in a country where millions of people went out on Friday nights instead of staying in to watch quality programming such as ‘Bill Moyers Journal.’” But Grouch later added, “Eut what does that prove? If complaining were a crime, you’d have to lock me up.”

Of the many questions still lingering from the trial, perhaps the biggest concerns the rumored witness to the crime. Acting on an “anonymous but credible tip,” the Sesame Street district attorney’s office made repeated public pleas for a certain Aloysius Snuffleupagus to come forward and testify. But the location of Mr. Snuffleupagus, let alone confirmation of his identity, remained uncertain.

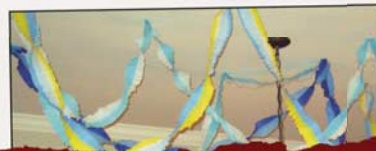
A recent CBS/New York Times poll shows that 83 percent of Americans were convinced of Elmo’s guilt. Leaving the courthouse after the stunning verdict, a defiant Elmo vowed to devote his multimillion-dollar, stuffed-animal-licensing fortune to “finding the real killer.” But by late afternoon, paparazzi photos of Elmo smiling and laughing during a round of golf cast doubt on the seriousness

CONTINUED ON PAGE A4

Obama Pardons Holder Early

the weekly
Standard

Know It’s Coming—Why Wait?



OCTOBER 22, 2012