the weekly Standard

GEORGE CLOONEY: GOOD FOR THE DRUZE?
LEE SMITH

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# THE GREAT SOCIETY AT FIFTY

BY NICHOLAS EBERSTADT

Lyndon Johnson signing the Medicare Bill, 1965

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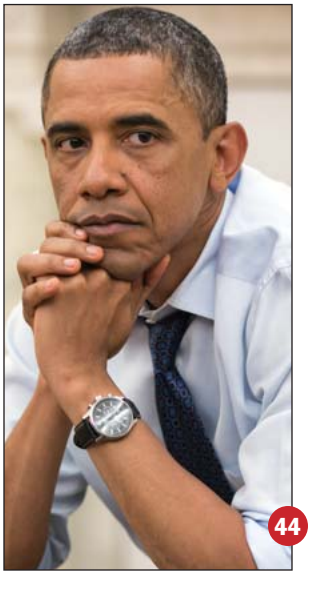



COVER: NEWSCOM

# The Return of Monica

The Scrapbook would be remiss if we failed to note that Monica Lewinsky is back. She has a tell-all article in the latest issue of *Vanity Fair*, and it's a curious moment for her reemergence. Much more than during the Clinton era, the American left is now ruled by identity politics and the virulent strain of dogmatic feminism that accompanies it. This dictates that the Lewinsky story be viewed in a new light. As the *Daily Beast* ever-so-subtly explains: "Stop Slut-Shaming Monica Lewinsky! . . . [W]hile we've all forgiven Bill Clinton, we can't seem to quit blaming his intern."

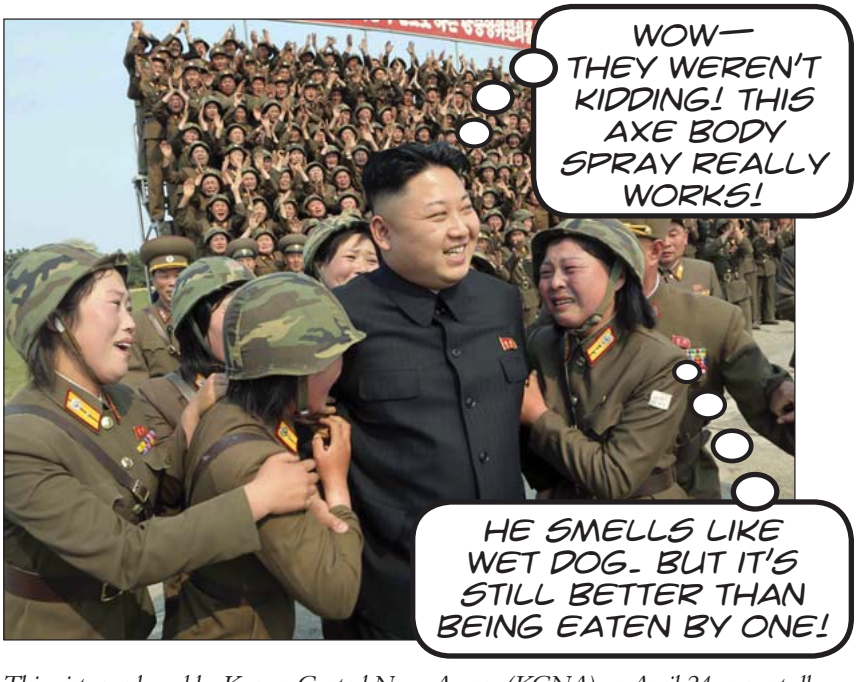
At the risk of further descent into identity politics, The Scrapbook would ask the *Daily Beast*: "What do you mean 'we,' white man?" Not all Americans have forgiven Clinton his transgressions against decency. And further, while no one would uphold Lewinsky as a role model for young adults, those of us who still bristle at Clinton's boorish behavior have never lacked moral clarity about who deserves the preponderance of blame for the unfortunate sexual encounter between the much-older and married leader of the free world and an impressionable White House intern. Yet somehow the segment of American society that is obsessed these days with "checking your privilege" and Foucauldian power structures is just now having an epiphany about who behaved most shamefully?

Or are they? The timing of Lewinsky's glossy and heavily orchestrated comeback seems more than coincidental. Consider that the most prominent slut-shamer of them all is now gearing up to run for president. In February, the *Washington Free Beacon* uncovered correspondence in which Hillary Clinton back in the day referred to Lewinsky as a "narcissistic loony toon." When your husband has been convicted of perjury charges related to covering up his serial adultery, calling his sexual conquests narcissistic might be looking at things through the wrong end of the telescope. And improbably, the correspondence also showed Hillary blamed herself for her husband's straying. We sympathize with a wife's difficulty in coming to terms with an unfaithful husband, but we suspect that contemporary feminists will tie themselves in knots if they are forced to defend Hillary's stance toward Monica.

Which is why we're guessing that Lewinsky's reemergence now—months before Hillary is likely to declare her candidacy—is probably being stage-managed by some division or other of the vast pro-Hillary conspiracy, whether Lewinsky knows she's a pawn or not. Better that Monica have her 15 minutes and the liberal Democratic base have an opportunity to hash out the Clintonian contradictions now, rather than in the middle of a presidential campaign. We're not normally paranoid about such matters, but we think it's safe to assume that *Vanity Fair* would not be keen on publishing anything they perceive as damaging the Clinton candidacy.

Liberals have gone through the motions of absolving the Clintons so many times there's no expectation the outcome will be different this time. But the rest of us are not looking forward to spending the next couple of years having allegedly intelligent people dismiss concerns about the Clintons' morality. Just last week, Hillary was asked at an event, "What's your favorite guilty pleasure?" She paused and responded, "I'm just trying to think of G-rated ones." Oh, how the sophisticates in the crowd laughed. But thanks to their cretinous behavior, every time we see the words "Clinton" and "guilty" in the same sentence—we can't think of anything G-rated, either. ♦

## What They Were Thinking




*This picture released by Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on April 24 purportedly shows Kim Jong-un with female soldiers after an inspection of a rocket launching drill.*

# Gary Becker, 1930-2014

The Scrapbook cited Gary Becker last week, in a list of outstanding recipients of the Bradley Prize. We're sorry to have a sadder reason to mention his name this week: He died May 3, at the age of 83. "He was perhaps the greatest living economist," George Mason University economist Tyler Cowen eulogized. Becker's influence is felt far beyond his own field, however. If the basic lesson of economics is that incentives matter, Gary Becker taught the world that incentives matter everywhere.

Becker's late mentor Milton Friedman called him "the greatest social scientist who has lived and worked in the last half-century." But his triumphant career, which culminated in the 1992 Nobel Prize in economics, didn't come easily. Gary Stanley Becker was born December 2, 1930, in Pottsville, in Pennsylvania's coal region, to parents with eighth-grade educations. His father had left Montreal for the United States at 16, and in the mid-1930s the family left Pottsville for Brooklyn, where they would remain. The younger Becker planned to major in mathematics until he "accidentally took a course in economics" his freshman year at Princeton.

By the time he graduated, in just three years, he had become disillusioned with the dismal science. But he found sociology "too difficult," so he stayed in economics when he started graduate studies at the University of Chicago. A course with Professor Friedman reinvigorated him. "He emphasized that economic theory was not a game played by clever academicians, but was a powerful tool to analyze the real world," Becker later recalled. He received his doctorate in 1955 and began his career at Chicago, but left for Columbia two years later. He returned to Chicago in 1969, "hastened by the student riots in 1968." At his death, he was professor of economics and sociology at Chicago and a senior fellow at Stanford's Hoover Institution.

Becker's great insight was to apply the lessons and methods of economics to the other social sciences—something neither economists nor social scientists appreciated at first; both treated him, he later said, with "much hostility." His Nobel citation noted his "radical extension of the applicability of economic theory in his analysis of relations among individuals outside of the market system." Adam Smith famously encapsulated the market and the incentives that make the system a success in one line: "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own self-interest." Economists studied the behavior of the butchers, brewers, bakers, and those who work for and buy from them. Becker realized that what explains those interactions—incentives, rent-seeking, and the like—could explain other social interactions. What many of his critics didn't grasp—and still don't—is that "rational choice theory," as it is unfortunately named, takes into account the complicated nature of human behavior better than Smith's pithy line implies. This approach "does not assume that individuals are motivated solely by selfishness or gain," as Becker said in his Nobel speech. "I have tried to pry economists away from narrow assumptions about self-interest. Behavior is driven by a much richer set of values and preferences."


The BACK of the BUS

As Professor Cowen says, "Summarizing Becker's contributions is like trying to summarize economics and it is not really possible." He used an economic understanding of decision-making to shed light on racial discrimination, crime, addiction, the family, and much else besides. Years ago, fellow Chicago economist Steven Levitt recounted a story from Becker's wife on his *Freakonomics* blog that might serve as a fitting tribute. Guity Nashat was dating the man who would become her husband, to the chagrin of a friend who called all Chicago economists "fascists." The day after a party Nashat hosted, the friend called to say she wished she had met Becker while she was there. "I said to her, you were talking to him all evening," Nashat recalled. "She was taken aback, and said, 'I thought Gary Becker is an economist; that man was fascinating. He spoke about marriage, divorce, and all kinds of interesting things.'" ♦

## Anti-Science Liberals

Democrats habitually congratulate themselves on being the brainy party. They're rational and rely on empirical evidence for their views. Or so they insist. And they strongly believe in science and are quick to accuse Republicans of being anti-science—that is, dopey and inclined to fall for pseudoscientific notions like astrology. Indeed, some supposedly scientific researchers regard belief in astrology as a measure of how conservative you are.

So researchers and Democrats and liberals are in for a humiliating jolt. It turns out that Republicans and conservatives are more likely than Democrats and liberals to regard astrology—the idea that the arrangement of the stars governs human affairs—as "not at all scientific." And this finding is empirical—based on surveys by the National Opinion Research Center and a review of public attitudes by the National Science Foundation! The cumulative polling evidence was put together by James Lindgren, the director of the Demography of Diversity Project at Northwestern University.

Sixty-six percent of Republicans dismiss astrology as nonscientific compared with 49 percent of Democrats. The gap is nearly as wide between liberal Democrats (57 percent) and conservative Republicans (70 percent). And on the question of whether the earth revolves around the sun and takes a year to do so, Democrats also fare poorly. When asked about this, 49 percent of Democrats answered correctly. Sixty-two percent of Republicans got it right.

For those who might be in doubt, there is no scientific evidence to support astrology. Yet, Lindgren wrote in a paper, "believers in astrology are not the only ones who hold beliefs for which there is no good evidence. Many political psychology researchers share the view that a belief in astrology is one of the things that defines how conservative you are." They're wrong. Lindgren's conclusion: "The relationship between science and politics is much more complex than the one-sided approach reported by most social scientists and journalists." That's putting it mildly. ♦

## IrvingKristol.org

The Scrapbook's friends at the Foundation for Constitutional Government last week announced the launch of a new website devoted to the writings of Irving Kristol. Both new readers and longtime admirers of Kristol's work will want to bookmark the site. Presented in a catalogued, searchable format, IrvingKristol.org features his complete bibliography—including interviews, videos, and book excerpts—which users can browse by topic. A not-for-profit organization devoted to supporting the serious study of politics and political philosophy, the FCG is developing a series of websites devoted to important, contemporary thinkers, including HarveyMansfield.org, JQWilson.org, and WalterBerns.org. We urge you to consult all these sites and share the links with your friends. ♦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# Ken Tomlinson, 1944-2014

My first contact with Ken Tomlinson was a phone call. He was a top editor at *Reader's Digest*, and I was a political reporter for the *Baltimore Sun*. He wanted me to write a piece on the least savory provisions of President Reagan's tax-cut legislation. It must have been late 1981, after the bill had been enacted and become part of the Reagan legend.

Ken had no problem with the sweeping tax cuts. He had no problem with Reagan's role. But he suspected a lot of tax loopholes and preferences had gotten into the bill as the price of getting it through Congress—special interest stuff. Ken was right. The mainstream press had been too busy attacking the tax cuts to notice.

It made for a pretty good article. And I was delighted to have my byline in a mass circulation magazine. I'm not sure what prompted Ken to call me, but I'm grateful he did. Besides, I got paid more than I ever had for an article, even more than the $1,500 kill fee I got from *Playboy* for a piece on the Supreme Court.

But that's not my point. Rather, it's what this tale tells you about Ken as a journalist. Ken, who died on May 1 at age 69, was many things: an owner of racehorses, a baseball fan, a serious Christian, a family man who faced death with unflinching courage. He was a great editor and reporter (his coverage of Vietnam POWs was superlative).

Ken was also a conservative. He usually voted for Republicans. He admired Reagan. None of that, however, kept him from taking on the icons of his political faith. A piece on the dark side of the Reagan tax bill is one of many examples. Another is "Does Oliver North Tell the Truth?" The North article caused heartburn among his Republican friends, including me. Ken saw his role as a conservative journalist, but never as a partisan.

I got to know him personally when he came to Washington in 1982 as Reagan's director of Voice of America. He arranged for me to appear on VOA's great radio chat show, *Issues in the News*. His decision to air daily editorials created a flap because, as Ken insisted, they "should reflect the viewpoint of the party in power." And they did.

STEPHANIE SARACENO / MCT / GETTY IMAGES

Ken was a crusader against liberal bias. And when he joined the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, which lavishes funds on PBS and NPR, and later was chairman of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, liberals fought back furiously. To them, Ken was an interloper. His efforts to bring ideological diversity to public broadcasting were intolerable.

It's no exaggeration to say Ken was persecuted. He was subjected to official inquiries that focused on picayunish details but were actually aimed at driving him out. He endured years of hostility before stepping down in 2007.

I don't know how Ken became a fervent baseball fan. But he liked ballplayers, especially minor leaguers. He followed their careers. He often took his sons Will and Lucas to see the Pittsfield Cubs in western Massachusetts, and they befriended a player named Laddie Renfroe. They were thrilled when Renfroe reached the majors—the Chicago Cubs.

Ken and I attended a Bible study for a decade or so. It's taught by Jerry Leachman, who has a ministry for middle-aged (or older) men. Jerry and Ken developed a deep friendship, and I watched Ken's faith grow into a strong and palpable part of his life and a comfort in his final months. As death approached, Ken's faith never flagged.

Roger Ream, who runs The Fund for American Studies in Washington, and I visited Ken at his home in Middleburg, Virginia, two weeks before he died. He brought up the subject of death. He soon grew weary—until the discussion turned to politics and in particular to Tom Cotton, the Arkansas congressman now running for the Senate.

Through his son Lucas, Ken had been introduced to Cotton when he was still in the Army and assigned to the Old Guard at Fort Myer, just outside Washington. That sparked a friendship that continued when Cotton returned to Arkansas in 2009.

Ken wrote, in The Weekly Standard, the first article in a national magazine about Cotton's political future. Ken urged him to run for the Senate in 2010, but Cotton demurred and instead won a House seat in 2012. With Cotton challenging incumbent Democrat Mark Pryor for the Senate this year, Ken felt vindicated. He told Cotton his advice hadn't been wrong, "just early."

**Fred Barnes**

the weekly Standard

# All Tweet, No Action

'Nigerian girls inspire international action," reads the headline on the front page of the May 7 *Washington Post*. But nowhere in the story will you learn of any action actually being taken to rescue the 276 Nigerian girls abducted over three weeks ago by the Islamic terror group Boko Haram. You find reports of "an international uproar" and "a growing outcry," of comments by President Barack Obama and phone calls by Secretary of State John Kerry, of warnings by U.N. officials, of a letter from all 20 female U.S. senators, which, according to one signer, "is the beginning of sending a very powerful signal," and of possible preparations for a "team of specialists" to possibly go to Nigeria to possibly help the Nigerian government possibly do something.

In sum, you find what you so often find when you observe modern liberalism: "the sorry spectacle of justice without a sword or of justice unable to use the sword."

The plight of the Nigerian girls also inspired former secretary of state Hillary Clinton to take "action," in the form of a much-reported tweet:

> Access to education is a basic right & an unconscionable reason to target innocent girls. We must stand up to terrorism. #BringBackOurGirls

Let us pause to note the near-perfection of the "Bring Back Our Girls" hashtag. "Our Girls" nicely captures modern liberalism's cloying faux-universalism. "Bring Back" epitomizes the pseudo-tough use of the imperative voice—but with no assumption of responsibility for action by the speaker. The tweet commands, "We must stand up to terrorism." But does the former secretary of state have any actual suggestion for action? Or are we to stand up for a while, and then sit back down?

After all, as the intrepid Josh Rogin reported in the *Daily Beast*:

> What Clinton didn't mention was that her own State Department refused to place Boko Haram on the list of foreign terrorist organizations in 2011, after the group bombed the UN headquarters in Abuja. The refusal came despite the urging of the Justice Department, the FBI, the CIA, and over a dozen Senators and Congressmen.
>
> "The one thing she could have done, the one tool she had at her disposal, she didn't use. And nobody can say she wasn't urged to do it. It's gross hypocrisy," said a former senior U.S. official who was involved in the debate. "The FBI, the CIA, and the Justice Department really wanted Boko Haram designated, they wanted the authorities that would provide to go after them, and they voiced that repeatedly to elected officials."
>
> In May 2012, then-Justice Department official Lisa Monaco (now at the White House) wrote to the State Department to urge Clinton to designate Boko Haram as a terrorist organization. The following month, Gen. Carter Ham, the chief of U.S. Africa Command, said that Boko Haram provided a "safe haven" for al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and was likely sharing explosives and funds with the group. And yet, Hillary Clinton's State Department still declined to place Boko Haram on its official terrorist roster.

It's not entirely clear how much difference being placed on the terrorist list would have made. But, as Rogin explains,

> Being placed on the State Department's list of foreign terrorist organizations allows U.S. law enforcement and intelligence agencies to use certain tools and authorities, including several found in the Patriot Act. The designation makes it illegal for any U.S. entities to do business with the group in question. It cuts off access to the U.S. financial system for the organization and anyone associating with it. And the designation also serves to stigmatize and isolate foreign organizations by encouraging other nations to take similar measures. . . .
>
> In the House, leading intelligence minded lawmakers wrote letter after letter to Clinton urging her to designate Boko Haram as terrorists. The effort in the House was led by then-Homeland Security Committee Chairman Peter King and Peter Meehan, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence. Meehan and his Democratic counterpart Jackie Speier put out a lengthy report in 2011 laying out the evidentiary basis for naming Boko Haram a terrorist organization, including the group's ties to Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and to Somalia's al-Shabab terrorist organization.

Secretary of State John Kerry eventually listed Boko Haram as a terrorist organization in 2013. But that is about all the action the Obama administration took. Indeed, the administration hasn't pushed to add Boko Haram to the U.N. Security Council's al Qaeda sanctions list. One imagines the administration may do so now.

Will that help "Bring Back Our Girls"? Probably not. Will the administration actually do much to cripple or destroy Boko Haram? Probably not.

It would be nice to learn that the administration has ordered the U.S. Marine Corps and various U.S. special operations forces to plan a rescue mission. It would be nice to learn the Obama administration has ordered the military to plan to destroy or cripple Boko Haram. It would

be nice to see Hillary Clinton make the case for this.

It would also be nice for Hillary Clinton to acknowledge the real and courageous efforts of others to save girls from the predatory grasp of some adherents to Islam. There is one woman who, perhaps more than anyone else in the world, has spent much of the last decade warning about groups like Boko Haram, and campaigning for stronger actions against the Islamists who terrorize girls in Nigeria and elsewhere. Her name is Ayaan Hirsi Ali. She was recently and disgracefully disinvited by Brandeis University, which had offered her an honorary degree. It would be nice to see Hillary Clinton speak up and stand up on her behalf.

She won't.

—*William Kristol*

# Who's Crazy?

Benghazi, crazy. That's the association the White House and its allies want to encourage as a House Select Committee begins what should be the most thorough investigation of the Benghazi attacks to date. The White House wants to delegitimize the process before it begins and preemptively discredit the findings. So last week senior White House adviser David Plouffe claimed that "a very loud, delusional minority" is driving the Republicans on Benghazi, and former representative Jane Harman compared questions about Benghazi to conspiracy theories about Vince Foster and aliens.

At first blush, it might seem an odd strategy. A Fox News poll taken in mid-April found that 60 percent of voters want Congress to continue investigating the Benghazi attacks—a total that included 77 percent of Republicans, 61 percent of independents, and 42 percent of Democrats. The same poll found that 61 percent of Americans believe the Obama administration is "trying to cover up" the real Benghazi story—87 percent of Republicans, 66 percent of independents, and 33 percent of Democrats. Just 26 percent think the administration has been "open and transparent." Notably, this poll was taken before the court-ordered release last month of previously withheld White House emails and talking points, a revelation that provided fresh evidence of White House stonewalling.

But the Obama administration's strategy isn't intended for the country at large so much as it is for the Washington press corps. The goal is to convince reporters that by investigating Benghazi they are doing the bidding of crackpots and political hacks. The White House is betting that journalists are more cynical about House Republicans and their motives than they are about the Obama administration's mendacity on Benghazi. There's some evidence that's right.

Most of the reporting after John Boehner's announcement of a select committee hinted at political motives. The *New York Times*, in a story that typified the coverage of the latest developments, led this way: "House Republicans on Friday escalated their battle with the White House over the continuing investigations into the 2012 attack that killed four Americans in Benghazi, Libya, ensuring that the issue will not recede in the midst of a fierce partisan fight for control of Congress."

There's no small irony here. The Obama administration sold a false narrative concealing the nature of a terrorist attack six weeks before the 2012 presidential election, and the coverage at the time reflected widespread journalistic skepticism about any possible political motive. But as Republicans move to investigate those false claims six months before midterm elections, their motives are self-evidently political.

It's true that some Republicans have made the White House case easier by engaging in irresponsible public theorizing about Benghazi. If the goal is to understand what happened and why the administration offered such a misleading account of the attacks, it's counterproductive as well as unwise for lawmakers to allow their conclusions to race ahead of the evidence.

Even so, reporters should do their jobs. The White House would have us believe not only that those still interested in Benghazi are conspiracy nuts, but that the Benghazi attacks are old news, that all relevant questions have been answered, and that the White House offered cheerful and eager cooperation with various inquiries.

That's not true.

Consider what we've seen just over the past two months:

• After repeatedly suggesting that they'd released all documents related to the Benghazi talking points, the administration was forced by a court to release some previously withheld emails. The White House explanation for its stonewalling? That the documents released as part of a FOIA request for documents about Benghazi were not, in fact, about Benghazi. This isn't a good-faith misunderstanding, it's an obvious attempt to deceive.

• Among the newly released documents were redacted versions of emails. Why the redactions? These originally unclassified emails were classified on February 5, 2014, long after they'd been requested under the Freedom of Information Act and separately subpoenaed by congressional oversight committees. Those newly classified emails are currently scheduled to be released without the redactions years after Obama has left the White House—some in 2019, others in 2027, and still others in 2037.

• Obama administration officials have long claimed that Susan Rice was simply repeating intelligence community talking points in her September 16, 2012, television appearances. But those talking points didn't once mention the anti-Islam video that Rice placed at the center of her narrative. Indeed, in the 100 pages of emails related to the talking points, released by the White House in May 2013, the video was mentioned just twice—once on a list of cables and again as the subject line on an email concerning a White House

meeting. If the intelligence community had believed that the video was the proximate cause of the Benghazi attacks, one assumes intelligence officials might have discussed it in emails. When former deputy CIA director Michael Morell was asked last month about Rice's reliance on the video, he testified: "When she talked about the video, my reaction was that was not something the analysts attributed this attack to."

• Jay Carney and others repeatedly claimed that intelligence officials were responsible for all of the substantive changes to the original Benghazi talking points. Carney insisted the White House had made just one "stylistic" mistake. Hillary Clinton testified that the intelligence community was the "principal decider" on the talking points. But an internal CIA email reported that the State Department had "major reservations" about the talking points and that "we revised the documents with their concerns in mind." In all, objections from Obama officials resulted in all or part of four paragraphs of the six-paragraph talking points being removed—148 of 248 words.

Now there are more questions about those edits. When Fox News's Bret Baier asked former National Security Council spokesman Tommy Vietor whether he had changed "attacks" to "demonstrations," surely something that would qualify as a substantive change, Vietor allowed that it was possible he had. "Maybe. I don't remember," he said.

• The top military intelligence official at U.S. Africa Command, whose job it was to determine responsibility for the attacks, concluded almost immediately that they were the work of al Qaeda-affiliated terrorists. This view was included in a Defense Intelligence Agency assessment published two days after the attacks, on September 13, 2012.

• Over the past six weeks, the Obama administration turned over some 3,200 pages of previously withheld Benghazi documents to the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee. These are documents that were subpoenaed in August 2013.

Add these recent developments to the vast landscape of previously discredited claims from top administration officials—on al Qaeda involvement, on the talking points, on the video, on transparency—and you have an issue that demands further investigation.

To claim otherwise is, well, crazy.

*—Stephen F. Hayes*

# Unfree Speech

It's hardly news that conservatives are not especially welcome on college and university campuses. Speech codes are designed to restrict discourse and punish the exercise of fundamental rights. Faculties are disproportionately left-wing in their politics. Administrators are sometimes intimidated by mobs. Conservative students can be marginalized and harassed. Visiting speakers are assailed, shouted down, sometimes physically assaulted.

We don't mean to exaggerate the problem: Conservatives can and do thrive in the academy, most professors practice tolerance, academic freedom generally prevails. Even the resistance and hostility felt by conservatives on campus has been answered by the growth, in recent decades, of organizations and institutions devoted to their protection. When a student is mistreated, or a visitor is attacked, word gets out. The ideological tone and tenor—the bias, dogma, intolerance, even violence—of the great institutions of higher learning in America has been a problem for conservatives, but not an insurmountable problem.

Still, while we remain optimistic about the life of the mind—the pursuit of knowledge, the free exchange of ideas, scholarly courtesy in the expression of judgment—we cannot pretend that all is well. Just a few minutes' research yields a long list of disquieting trends and incidents on campus, reflecting a hardening, not softening, of what can only be called a totalitarian impulse on the academic left.

Two recent, rather ominous, examples illustrate the point. Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a Somali-born crusader for women's rights who has lived under Islamist death threats for the past decade, was asked to be the commencement speaker at Brandeis this month. And Condoleezza Rice, a distinguished scholar of international relations and first African-American woman to serve as secretary of state, was invited to receive an honorary degree at Rutgers. Both accepted their invitations. But after lengthy campaigns of abuse and vilification—not to say threats of disruption and violence—neither will now set foot on either campus. With a calculated insult, Brandeis withdrew its offer to Hirsi Ali; and after lukewarm public support from the Rutgers president, Condoleezza Rice chose to withdraw, explaining that she did not wish to be "a distraction for the university community at this very special time."

It would be tempting, at this juncture, to wonder at what impulse drives such hostility toward two black women of courage and achievement—such hostility, indeed, as can lean toward the threat of violence. But the basic issue is political: Both are identifiably conservative, and therefore, so far as the left is concerned, *persona non grata* in the one place where such women should be especially welcome.

Obviously, as we say, this is a problem for conservatives. But as it broadens and proliferates, as this culture of bigotry takes root and wields power, such campus intolerance will become a problem for the left as well—and in the long run, for anyone who cares about liberal education, about the life of the mind, about the future of freedom itself. Colleges and universities, take note: The one institution where every American should be free to speak her mind, to follow where knowledge leads, to argue and debate, without fear and without fear of reprisal, is the one place where that freedom is now most imperiled.

*—Philip Terzian*

# But Is It Good for the Druze?

## George Clooney and his future in-laws.

**BY LEE SMITH**

George Clooney's reps have yet to make the official announcement, but all the tabloids and gossip sheets are reporting that the Hollywood heartthrob recently popped the question to his girlfriend of less than a year, Amal Alamuddin. The 36-year-old Beirut-born and London-based human rights lawyer (who speaks French, English, and Arabic) is said to be a good match for the screen star who celebrated his 53rd birthday last week, but that's a given—Clooney's past paramours have included cocktail waitresses, models, and a professional wrestler. The more interesting question is whether Clooney is good for the Druze, the small confessional sect of which his fiancée is a member.

The Druze are a heterodox offshoot of Shia Islam that dates back to the 11th century. Most of the world's less than a million-and-a-half Druze live in the Levant. There are roughly 20,000 Druze in Jordan, 125,000 in Israel, 700,000 in Syria, and a quarter of a million in Lebanon, home to what is perhaps the most influential Druze community, led by Walid Jumblatt. An opponent of the Syrian regime and onetime pillar of Lebanon's pro-democracy movement who now sees his sect caught in the middle of a Shiite-Sunni regional war, Jumblatt welcomes the Clooney-Alamuddin announcement as rare good news. He is eager, he wrote me in an email, to throw a party for the actor at his ancestral home in the Chouf Mountains. "Tell me when George Clooney will be coming to Lebanon so I can greet him in Moukhtara. I will bring a delegation of Druze sheikhs," Jumblatt gushed. "As for Amal Alamuddin, well, she is lucky."

"Sure it's good for us," says Makram Rabah, a doctoral candidate in history at Georgetown whose research is on the role of his own Druze community in the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990). "Any media support on his end making Druze look good is welcome," says Rabah. "Instead of being on the front page of the news section when we're killing and dying, we're now featured in entertainment magazines."

And it's good for the future groom, too, says Rabah. "My advice to Clooney is to take advantage of his association with the Druze. Her village, Baakline, is a nice place to spend a vacation. And since he's done advocacy on Sudan issues, he should know he is much safer going to Lebanon than Darfur." Also, says Rabah, he should embrace the sect's customs. "The essence of Druze tradition is tribal," he explains. "So visiting with the Druze at weddings and funerals are duties. And then he should also drink arak," the anise-flavored liqueur that is Lebanon's national drink, and which the Druze, in spite of their Muslim identity, drink in abundance. "It would be good," adds Rabah, "if Clooney learned how to dance the *dabke*."

"Clooney better acquire a taste for yerba maté," says Rola Abdul-Latif, a Lebanese-born Druze who lives in Washington, D.C. Maté is the tea-like beverage that Druze immigrants to Latin America brought back home with them. "But the really big thing is food," says Abdul-Latif. "Being passionate about food is a way to get close to the hearts of the Druze."

Abdul-Latif's husband, the non-Druze journalist Hussain Abdul-Hussain, also has some advice for Clooney. "The upside" of marrying a Druze, jokes Abdul-Hussain, "is that if he is worried about having to learn a new religion, he won't. Most of the Druze themselves know nothing about their faith, so he doesn't have to fear awkward moments at holiday celebrations like Passover or Christmas, because there aren't any holidays."

The downside, says Abdul-Hussain, is that some Druze don't like non-Druze men marrying Druze women. "He has to be careful which Druze he tells that he's married to a Druze. He might run into people who won't like it, even though he's George Clooney." That would seem to include members of the bride-to-be's family. Interviewed by the local Lebanese press, Alamuddin's grandmother Safa asked if Clooney was Druze. Told he wasn't, she replied, "So what happened? There are no more young Druze men left?"

The Druze have been known to take their tribal solidarity to violent extremes. In an incident widely

GARY LOCKE

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reported in the Lebanese press last July, a gang of Druze men beat and mutilated a Sunni man who'd eloped with a family member. Afterwards, Jumblatt excoriated his people. "It would be useful after the occurrence of the barbaric act," he wrote, "for the Druze community to hold an internal dialogue over the future of the sect. . . . Where will the culture of rejecting the other that breeds intolerance and hate lead? Does that not create a threat to the future?"

Perhaps because of the Syrian war now engulfing the region, Jumblatt is often thinking about the future and where the Druze will find a place in it. He inherited his role after Bashar al-Assad's father Hafez killed his father Kemal in 1977, and he's preparing his own son Taymur to replace him. Given Jumblatt's open contempt for the Syrian president, who regards him similarly, his end may come sooner rather than later. Jumblatts, as he likes to remark, don't die in bed—like his father, his grandfather was assassinated. Even when joking, Jumblatt seems to see dark clouds ahead for himself and the Druze. "You can tell Clooney to do a movie about the Druze, and he could say that they are the last of the Mohicans," Jumblatt wrote me. "I could be Geronimo."

For such a tiny sect, the Druze have been an object of fascination for centuries. After Napoleon's 1798 conquest of Egypt, Europe was mad for all things Oriental and the Druze's esoteric wisdom—seemingly bred from a mixture of Ismailism, a heterodox branch of Shiism, as well as Sufism and Gnosticism—was appealingly exotic. Researchers and travelers visited the Druze heartland in the Lebanese mountains to uncover the sect's mysteries. They came away with only wisps of smoke, albeit very colorful ones. In his travel book *Journey to the Orient*, the 19th-century French poet Gérard de Nerval relates a likely fictional interview with a Druze sheikh who, rather than answer Nerval's questions about the Druze faith directly, spins out a long tale of impossible and forbidden love.

The sheikh's story, which Nerval called "The Tale of the Caliph Hakim," purports to chronicle the events leading to the mysterious disappearance, or death, of one of the Druze founding figures, Al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah (985-1021 A.D.), the sixth caliph of the Fatimid dynasty, an Ismaili empire encompassing much of North Africa and the Levant with its capital in Cairo. Al-Hakim, often disparagingly referred to as the "Mad Caliph," may have believed he was God incarnate. One of the faith's earliest adherents certainly did—Muhammad bin Ismail Nashtakin al-Darazi, a renegade Ismaili preacher from whom it seems the Druze derive their name and whom other early adherents, including the Druze imam, Hamza ibn Ali, quickly came to consider a heretic.

Al-Hakim and Hamza ibn Ali dispatched letters to various communities in regions where the Druze are now concentrated encouraging them to accept the key Druze doctrine, *tawhid*, the knowledge of the oneness of God. The first letter is from 1017, when Al-Hakim announced the opening of the *da'wa*, or invitation to convert. In total there are 106 letters, dealing mainly with spiritual matters, which form the Druze's sacred text, *The Epistles of Wisdom*. Perhaps because of political persecution, the *da'wa* was closed in 1043, at which point the Druze would theoretically accept no more converts—in practice it appears that there were many subsequent conversions. In any case, timelines are somewhat beside the point when it comes to the Druze. They believe that their souls never die but are reincarnated in the body of another Druze, a conviction that, according to one scholar, gives rise to the Druze saying, "We are born in each other's houses."

The apparently ethereal nature of Druze spirituality—which, again, the vast majority of Druze know little or nothing about—is in sharp contrast to their worldly reputation. The Druze are stout, hard-minded mountain men, farmers, and laborers, best known for their fighting skills and political agility—both of which talents are evidenced by the fact that this tiny group has survived the violent furies of the Middle East for nearly a millennium.

The Druze fought the Crusaders for nearly 200 years and then resisted the Ottomans. In the mid-19th century, the Druze were in conflict with their mountain neighbors, the Maronites, which in 1860 culminated in one of the region's bloodiest episodes of sectarian warfare. The Druze and the Maronites were again on opposing sides when the Lebanese civil war erupted in 1975. Kemal Jumblatt, an Arab nationalist, leftist, and avowed Buddhist who saw similarities between Buddhism and Druze belief, cast his lot with the Palestinians, as did Walid when his father was murdered in 1977. It wasn't until after the war that Jumblatt made his peace with the Maronites. He and Samir Geagea, head of the Christian militia that Jumblatt's Druze fought in the mountains in a bitter reprise of the 1860 war, became two of the cornerstones of Lebanon's pro-democracy March 14 movement.

For many observers, Jumblatt's turnaround—from Syrian ally to opposition leader, from a Soviet client in the 1980s to a friend of the Bush White House a decade ago—was evidence of an almost deranged opportunism. To the Druze it all made perfect sense. They are by necessity opportunistic—a small minority that must bend with the wind or be broken by it. Israel's Druze community, for instance, discerned very early during the 1948 war for independence that the Zionists were going to defeat the Arabs and cast their fate with the former. They are among the Jewish state's proudest citizens, fiercest warriors, and most active politicians. Syria's Druze community has also subscribed to the power of the state—taking Assad's side in the three-year-long civil war.

The Druze of Lebanon are different insofar as they stand on the sidelines of a political system designed to balance the country's three largest communities: Christians, Sunnis, and Shiites. This affords Jumblatt what is effectively a permanent swing vote, and thus more room to maneuver and win concessions for himself and the Druze. Jumblatt is often called a "weather

vane" as he is acutely sensitive to the region's political winds. When he saw the United States unleash its military might in Iraq, he seized the chance and turned against his former Syrian overlords and jumped on the freedom agenda bandwagon. However, even after it was clear that neither the White House nor the international community was going to protect him, his Druze, or his country from Assad's depredations, he continued to call out Assad and Iran and, closer to home, Hezbollah, which laid siege to the Chouf mountain fastness of the Druze in May 2008.

Thus, at a critical moment for the Druze, Jumblatt let fall the mask of the opportunist. He stuck his neck out in the knowledge that his enemies, Assad among others, have long memories and longer knives.

The leaders of minority communities throughout the Middle East, including Christian clerics, like some Western officials and analysts, say they prefer Assad to the Sunni-majority opposition because he protects minorities. Not Jumblatt. Two years ago he urged Syria's Druze soldiers to stay at home and "refrain from participating" in the war to prop up Assad. "We must avoid being part of an axis against [Syria's Sunni] majority in order to avoid future political repercussions," he said, adding, "popular memory has no mercy." His warnings were ignored.

It seems that no one is listening to Jumblatt these days—not about the dangers facing his Druze, especially in the midst of the Syrian conflict. I emailed him that Clooney's engagement seems a golden opportunity. Here's a man who advocates on behalf of Darfur and other foreign policy issues, and plays basketball with the American president, a close personal friend, Clooney claims. With Clooney marrying a Druze, maybe he could advocate on behalf of the Druze. Maybe after more than 150,000 dead in Syria, he could finally get through to Obama. Maybe Clooney could convince Obama to bring down Assad once and for all. "Please let me be far from the empathy of Obama," Jumblatt wrote back, "and the butcher Bashar."♦

# Trouble at the Top

## Chinese officialdom is in turmoil.

**BY ABRAM N. SHULSKY & GARY SCHMITT**

In little over a year, close to 60 Chinese officials have died of unnatural causes, with most being suicides. The strong suspicion is that this epidemic of mysterious deaths among China's elite is likely tied to the anticorruption campaign being led by Chinese president and party general secretary Xi Jinping.

Certainly Xi Jinping's anticorruption drive has reached higher in the bureaucracy than any such effort in decades. Coming on the heels of the prosecution of the high-flying Bo Xilai, a former Central Politburo member and potential rival of Xi, it raises the possibility of elite instability on a level not seen since the Cultural Revolution. Not surprisingly, Chinese newspapers have been told in a secret order from Beijing to stop reporting on suicides by top government and party officials.

*Xi Jinping*

Understanding what all this means is one of the U.S. government's most important strategic intelligence tasks. While China is not, in intelligence terms, a "closed society" along the lines of the former Soviet Union or present-day North Korea, it remains a challenge to get inside the heads, as it were, of China's elite to understand how they view the challenges they face, how decisions are made, and why.

Needless to say, it has proven difficult to recruit highly placed sources within a country with a pervasive domestic security apparatus like China's. Effective internal security programs make it difficult, first, to recruit someone and, second, to keep that individual reporting for any length of time without being discovered.

Hence, in the past, when facing such hard targets, a primary source of information—indeed, perhaps the principal source of information at times—was the timely defection. An official who for one reason or another decides to abandon his country and who has had access through his employment or connections to valuable information can reasonably hope to be welcomed in countries that want the information. Although not as valuable as "agents-in-place," defectors have been crucial sources of intelligence about governments where information is scant.

Given our need for insight into the thinking of the Chinese elite, one would think that this might be an extremely propitious time for this type of informant. Xi Jinping's anticorruption campaign last year led to the punishment of more than 180,000 party officials for abuse of power and corruption, according to the Chinese Communist party's own numbers. And while most were minor functionaries, the net has broadened to include senior officers in the party, the military, and the security services.

The most prominent target, Zhou Yongkang, was a former Politburo Standing Committee member, head of the country's oil company, and director of China's domestic security agency. Zhou's reported links with the disgraced Bo Xilai suggest that the apparent rivalry between Xi and Bo is not unconnected with Zhou's current troubles. One can speculate

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that Zhou's circle of bureaucratic allies and clients, as well as members of his family, must be feeling the heat.

As the noose tightens, U.S. intelligence ought to make clear to those Chinese within the government elite that there are safe havens in the West—as long as they are willing to cooperate.

Thanks to China's economic boom, and the very corruption that Xi now sees as threatening the future of Communist rule in China, many members of the elite have managed to smuggle a massive amount of wealth out of the country. Members of the elite have sent their children to college in the West, especially in the United States and the United Kingdom, and are purchasing real estate in Manhattan, London, and elsewhere in increasingly large numbers.

This is clearly an elite worried about its future. U.S. intelligence is in a position to facilitate defectors' enjoyment of their wealth in relative security. Or, should Langley want to play hardball, it could well be in a position, in certain cases, to increase the danger of those who might want to stay in China by threatening to reveal embarrassing bits of information publicly, such as how much lucre they have stashed away, and where they have hidden it.

One would prefer, of course, to welcome only defectors with high-minded motives, such as a desire to promote the democratization of their homeland. Most, however, will leave for less noble reasons, such as avoiding imprisonment. Some will be motivated by simple greed. It's the intelligence community's job to hold its nose, encourage defections, and, in turn, provide policymakers with information and insights about a Chinese ruling elite whose thinking and workings remain far too closed for American security and comfort.

While Russia's aggressive posture toward Ukraine currently tops our national security agenda, it's a good bet that, over the longer term, China will remain the foreign country with which the United States will be most concerned. Let's hope U.S. intelligence is taking advantage of the internal turmoil among the Chinese elite. ♦

# Codes of Conduct

## World Vision and the definition of marriage.

**BY TERRY EASTLAND**

On March 24, World Vision, one of the nation's best-known Christian relief and development nonprofits and one of the world's largest charities, announced that it would no longer exclude from employment, on its stateside staff of 1,100, Christians who are in legal same-sex marriages. Two days later, having heard from church partners and supporters who disagreed with the decision, the board rescinded it. Thus, as before, no one in a same-sex marriage may work for World Vision.


*World Vision's Federal Way, Washington, headquarters*

The World Vision story is about same-sex marriage, obviously, but it arose in the context of the religious nonprofit's employment policies. Chief among the conditions of employment is that of being a Christian, a condition that may be met by an affirmation of World Vision's Statement of Faith or the venerable Apostles' Creed. Other conditions of employment concern conduct, including sexual conduct, and until March 24, World Vision had required abstinence of unmarried employees and fidelity of married, with marriage defined as the union of one man and one woman.

That happens to be the historic teaching of Christianity on sexual conduct, and you'd expect standards of sexual conduct for employees at a Christian organization, if they exist, to reflect the traditional ethic, as they did in the case of World Vision. But some members of the organization's board thought the old standards needed to be revised.

Founded in 1950 by evangelical Protestants, when that branch of American Christianity had begun its midcentury revival, World Vision has since diversified theologically; its staff now represent more than 50 denominations. Some have allowed same-sex marriages or unions, including the Episcopal church, United Church of Christ, and mainline Lutherans and Presbyterians.

In light of that development, as well as the legalization of same-sex marriage in 17 states (including World Vision's home state of Washington) and the District of Columbia, the board grew concerned that if a member of one of those churches who was in a legal same-sex marriage were to apply to World Vision, the organization would have to turn the applicant away. Anxious about such an outcome, the board found a way to avoid it—by treating same-sex

AP / TED S. WARREN

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marriage as it does other "debated issues," including baptism, remarriage, and divorce. On such issues World Vision doesn't require specific beliefs or conduct as conditions of employment. That is, it takes no position at all on these matters, leaving them under the authority of the churches World Vision staff attend.

By taking that approach to same-sex marriage, said World Vision president Richard Stearns in an exclusive interview with *Christianity Today*, the organization could "treat all of our employees the same way: abstinence outside of marriage and fidelity within it," with "marriage" encompassing both same-sex marriage and traditional marriage. Thus, Christians in same-sex marriages, just like Christians in traditional marriages, could be hired—and fired if they were not faithful to their partners. And unmarried gay Christians could be fired, just like unmarried heterosexual Christians, if they were not abstinent.

Applying fidelity and abstinence to homosexual and heterosexual conduct alike was odd, if only because fidelity and abstinence are biblically rooted standards and intended to support traditional marriage. But World Vision's equality principle apparently demanded as much. In any case, the organization's objective was to free itself to be able to hire a Christian in a same-sex marriage. And by making the necessary change in employment conduct policy, World Vision would be spared, the board hoped, infighting over same-sex marriage that could destroy the unity needed to carry out the charity's core purpose of serving the poor.

In the interview with *Christianity Today*, Stearns characterized the change in policy as "very narrow," involving "a decision about whether or not you are eligible for employment . . . based on this single issue, and nothing more." He stated his hope that "all of our donors and partners will understand it, and will agree with our exhortation to unite around what unites us. . . . I'm hoping not to lose supporters over the change."

World Vision did lose some supporters, but its quick action probably stemmed any significant financial losses. In a letter to friends of World Vision announcing the about-face, Stearns, joined by board chairman Jim Beré, said the change in policy was a mistake. "We failed to be consistent with [World Vision's] commitment to the traditional understanding of Biblical marriage and our own Statement of Faith, which says, 'We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.'"

A failure to be consistent was putting it mildly. Objectively considered, World Vision had violated its own Statement of Faith by failing to accept what the Bible says about marriage, which is that it is the union of a man and a woman.

*Richard Stearns*

The World Vision story concerns Christian theology and ethics, the church and its mission, and parachurches (like World Vision) and their operations. But it is also a reminder of how in the right circumstances a particular culture can wield considerable influence. Here, World Vision heard in no uncertain terms from an evangelical culture that was caught unawares, a culture that World Vision is still a part of and indeed that constitutes its "base," to use a political term. It is a culture that tends to be theologically conservative, accepting of the biblical understanding of marriage, and unwilling to treat same-sex marriage neutrally. "We . . . failed to seek enough counsel from our own Christian partners" is how Stearns and Beré obliquely put it.

In stopping World Vision in its tracks, this evangelical culture wielded influence where it plausibly could—just as the nation's high-tech culture, symbolized by the place name Silicon Valley, which strongly favors same-sex marriage, did in forcing (albeit shamefully) the resignation of Brendan Eich, the chief executive officer of Mozilla. Eich's sin was that he made a donation in 2008 in support of Proposition 8, the California ballot initiative that defined marriage as the union of a man and a woman. It's not surprising, by the way, that the one person who quit the World Vision board over the organization's reversal of policy is the director of corporate giving at Google.

World Vision's reversal also cuts against the seeming inevitability of same-sex marriage. At the turn of the century, few would have anticipated the decisions over the past decade by legislatures and courts and voters in favor of same-sex marriage. But now a respected religious nonprofit has felt compelled to reinstate as a condition of employment fidelity in marriage defined as the union of husband and wife. This may not be an indicator of anything more; with support for its cause among all Americans now at 54 percent, according to the Pew Research Center, the same-sex marriage movement may be on its way to prevailing. But here, with the change of policy by World Vision and then the abrupt reversal, it saw a setback.

Eric Rassbach of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty observes that same-sex marriage and religious liberty are in tension, with more and more litigation involving them a likely prospect. World Vision has already proven itself one of the strongest defenders of the hiring rights of religious nonprofits and can be expected to keep its lawyers busy. It won't be surprising to see World Vision on a brief in defense of a religious nonprofit whose hiring policies are said to violate nondiscrimination rules—including ones prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. ♦

WORLD VISION

# Obamacare Myth-Making

## Five phony success stories.

**BY JAY COST**

With enrollment in the Obamacare exchanges now closed, Democrats and their friends in the media are ebullient. Obamacare is an enormous success, they say, and conservatives have been humiliated. On closer inspection, however, things seem decidedly less bullish for President Obama's signature achievement.

Among the many exaggerations and inaccuracies the law's defenders are touting, five stand out.

• First, they say that premium rates are down. In support of this, liberals cite research from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), but they misinterpret it. In fact, the CBO's most recent estimate of premiums shows a decline not from what they were in 2013, before the implementation of Obamacare, but rather from what CBO estimated they would be in 2014. Studies from many outlets have shown that rates have gone up since 2013, substantially for many people.

This is no mystery. Obamacare basically outlawed insurance underwriting, so rates must go up as healthy people pay the price for the sick. Insurers, moreover, have also increased deductibles and co-pays and narrowed doctor networks and drug formularies.

• Second, supporters claim that Obamacare exceeded the enrollment target promulgated by the CBO. This is questionable. The CBO last year projected 7 million enrollees, and the Obama administration now gloats that 8 million people selected a plan in the exchanges. But not everybody who selected a plan will pay for it. The best estimate right now is that about 15 percent of initial enrollees are not paying their first premiums. If that holds, paid enrollment will come in slightly under CBO's 2013 prediction.

But there is more. CBO downgraded its forecast earlier this year from 7 million to 6 million, and this month declined to update it even after the "surge" of last-minute enrollees began. The reason: The prediction is an *annual average*. By this metric, Obamacare will struggle to hit 6 million, with enrollment so weak in the first quarter.

• Third, liberals claim that insurers are happy, pointing to recent earnings reports from the biggest companies. But this is a non sequitur. The insurers have become clients of government. Federal subsidies to exchange insurers this year will hit approximately $10 billion, thanks to a program called "reinsurance" that reimburses Obamacare exchange enrollees for excessive claims. As a point of reference, $10 billion just about equals the combined profits of the top five insurers in 2013. Moreover, the total subsidy could go even higher, thanks to another feature of Obamacare known as "risk corridors." Insurers on the exchanges are enjoying private profits and socialized losses. Who wouldn't be happy? What will really matter is how insurers feel in 2017, when reinsurance and risk corridors expire and the exchanges must stand on their own.

• Fourth, liberals claim the law is "working." This omits the dozens of provisions that the president has suspended or delayed because they were *not* working—for budgetary or political reasons. The suspended

GARY LOCKE

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or postponed provisions include the mandate that businesses cover full-time employees, the cancellation of noncompliant plans, and cuts to Medicare Advantage.

In fact, what is working is a very narrow segment of the law, the most politically salable part: the distribution of tax credits so people with low incomes can buy heavily subsidized insurance coverage. To say the law is working is like saying you "ate your dinner" when you gulped down your dessert and skipped the veggies. Just as your mother said you could not have one without the other, so the popular provisions of Obamacare are linked to the unpopular ones. Sooner or later, the administration will have to enforce the law—or watch a vast array of unintended side effects disrupt the national health care system.

• Fifth, the left assures us Obamacare cannot be repealed. This is particularly rich, considering all the provisions the administration itself has effectively repealed when it found them inconvenient.

Irony aside, Obamacare's future is still very much in doubt. Whereas Medicare and Social Security were designed to benefit everybody sooner or later, Obamacare creates vast classes of winners and losers. It is to the losers that many of the suspensions are directed. But the losers will eventually have to suffer the harm that Obamacare is set to deliver. And that creates the political space for repeal.

Imagine Republicans win the presidency and a congressional majority in 2016. Does anybody doubt they will go after Obamacare with every tool available? If they do, parts of the law will surely survive, but the finished product will be so different from what exists now that Democrats will bemoan Obamacare's "repeal."

The funny thing is that, for all the myth-making about Obamacare, the left still cannot sell it to the American public. Even after a month of glowing coverage, polls from the major media outlets show that support for the law is basically flat, stuck in the low 40s, well below the level of opposition. ♦

# Can You Spot the Differences?

## Seven Alabama Republicans are hard to tell apart.

**BY MARIA SANTOS**

*Birmingham, Ala.*

No House district in the country is more Republican than Alabama's 6th, where the retirement of Spencer Bachus opens the seat for the first time in 22 years. The district voted 74 percent for Mitt Romney, so whoever captures a majority in the seven-way Republican primary in June—or, in the likely event no one does, whoever wins the runoff in July—can expect to be moving to Washington.

This is one of the wealthiest areas in the Deep South, home to the exclusive Shoal Creek Golf and Country Club, which still banned African-American members as recently as 1990. Its hosting of the PGA Championship that year caused a national scandal that eventually pried open its doors. Even now, the 6th District is 81 percent white, while the neighboring 7th is 64 percent black.

And the crowded GOP primary may be the country's most expensive. Four candidates have each raised around or over $400,000. Predictably, all seven are conservative white males who agree on most issues.

There's Gary Palmer, founder of the influential Alabama Policy Institute, as well as a national network of conservative state think tanks, the State Policy Network. At API he was instrumental in defeating a referendum to legalize the lottery, and successfully fought Republican governor Bob Riley's proposed $1 billion in tax increases. In college he was a walk-on for the University of Alabama's football team under coach Bear Bryant.

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Palmer says he struggles to answer briefly in debates "because I'm the nerd . . . but nobody questions or even intimates that anybody else knows more about the policy than me." During our interview he looks over my shoulder and corrects me when I note that he helped reduce the death tax from 55 percent to 30 percent—it should be 35 percent. He's known as serious but somewhat humorless.

Will Brooke, a wealthy venture capitalist, aired a TV ad in which he uses Obamacare regulations for target practice. He's fond of whipping a rumpled Constitution out of his jacket pocket. "I do have a little bit of a libertarian streak in me," he says. "I'm a big Adam Smith guy." He opposes drug legalization and gay marriage, but supports leaving those issues to the states. He was for granting illegal immigrants legal status short of citizenship until Laura Ingraham publicly shamed him into signing an anti-immigration pledge. He considers himself a skilled negotiator who would "go work behind the scenes, quietly" in Congress.

Paul DeMarco, a state representative for nine years, is the kind of politician who looks deep into your eyes and thanks you for your question. Since five of his opponents have never held political office, he stresses his experience. "I don't need someone to teach me on the job," he says, "because I think I've earned that reputation." He would prioritize cutting oppressive EPA regulations. His $850,000 in campaign funds top Brooke's $739,000.

Chad Mathis, an orthopedic surgeon from Indiana, sticks out as the only candidate without a thick Alabama accent. He moved here around 2006, and almost a third of his

donations come from outside the state. He bristles when I ask if not being a native might be a handicap, responding that his grandfather is from Alabama. He's been endorsed by the right-wing website RedState, Senator Mike Lee, and FreedomWorks. He's also backed by several members of the House "doctor caucus," which he hopes to join.

Mathis's campaign is the most negative. He ran a radio ad attacking four of his opponents—Scott Beason, Brooke, DeMarco, and Palmer—saying, "They're called the 'Gang of Four'" and "they'll fit right in" in Washington. Mathis, who came up with the phrase "Gang of Four," doesn't regret running it. Palmer thinks he should, because Alabamians "really don't take kindly to someone moving down and staying here a little while and then deciding they want to be our congressman . . . and then attacking people that have been involved in their community almost their entire lifetime." Governor Mike Pence of Indiana, Mathis's home state, endorsed Palmer.


*We're betting on the guy in the white shirt and gray suit.*

State senator Scott Beason has been in the legislature for 16 years, although he says he doesn't enjoy it there. He challenged Bachus in 2012 and lost 61-28 percent. He also led the effort to pass an immigration law stricter than Arizona's. He criticizes his opponents' political inexperience, saying, "I think it's fair to ask, 'Well, what have you been doing? Have you been fighting these fights at all?'"

Beason is blunt, which gets him in trouble. Recently he called a textbook "anti-American" for asking students to compare Arthur Miller's account of the Salem witch trials in his play *The Crucible* with the 1950s McCarthy investigations. Miller wrote the play to criticize McCarthyism. "All I said is, 'Let's just be balanced,'" Beason insists. He was once caught on tape jokingly calling black people "aborigines." "I was defended by members of the black caucus in the legislature," he responds. He brings up the rear on fundraising with about $16,000.

Tom Vignuelle is a cattle farmer and owns Royal Bedding Manufacturing, Inc. He thinks he has experience the other business candidates don't. "Ask them the last time they filed their sales tax. Ask them the last time they did receivables and payables." He's backed by a few small Tea Party groups and likes to talk about reforming the Federal Reserve. He's low on funds, at about $45,000.

And finally there's Robert Shattuck. The other candidates smirk politely at his name. Shattuck refuses to answer policy questions, which he calls "academic." What he will say is that "Congress is not working" and nothing else should be discussed. He has zero funds and writes so prolifically on his email list and blog—al6thcongdistihaveuntiljan13.blogspot.com—that a typical comment, from a *U.S. News* reporter, is, "I want off of this list."

On a Monday afternoon in Birmingham's largest suburb, all seven candidates come to Hoover High School—renowned for its nationally ranked football team—to debate. But the questions barely matter: All of the candidates (except Shattuck) support essentially the same things. They even recite many of the same tropes. Several "married their high-school sweetheart," most have "lived here their whole life," several "were the first in their family to go to college."

So what will decide the race? Money? Beason's fundraiser, Mike Rubino, doesn't think so—although with Beason trailing in funds, he has an interest in thinking that. He's working campaigns in several states, but says this one is different. He splits the district between the wealthy Homewood/Vestavia/Mountain Brook neighborhoods and the more rural surrounding areas. "You have Will Brooke and Paul DeMarco who are centrally located here," Rubino says, "and they raise so much money. . . . But does that necessarily mean that if you turn out all of Mountain Brook, you can win this race?"

In Alabama's last governor's race, Bradley Byrne lost to Robert Bentley in the Republican runoff despite vastly outspending him. Beason says people here aren't swayed by things money can buy, like TV ads. "They'll be talking to people at church or on the baseball field and all that kind of stuff."

With the most recent poll, conducted for the Mathis campaign, showing 44 percent of voters undecided and several candidates clustered, predictions would be foolhardy. What is crystal clear, though, is why this race is crowded. Whoever wins stands an excellent chance of being in Congress a long time. ♦

AL.COM

# A Failure of Policy

## Al Qaeda runs amok.

**BY THOMAS JOSCELYN**

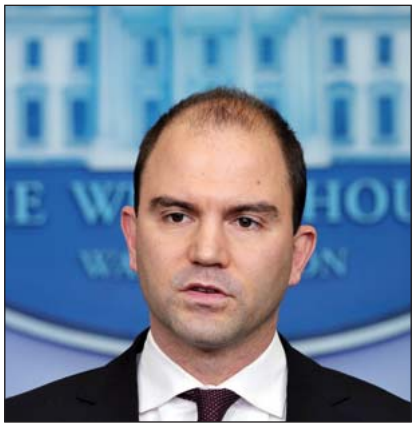
Forty-one recently declassified State Department documents obtained by Judicial Watch, a conservative watchdog group, have reignited the controversy over the September 11, 2012, terrorist attack in Benghazi, Libya. One document in particular, an email authored by Ben Rhodes, a deputy national security adviser and speechwriter for the president, has garnered the most attention.

Shortly after 8 P.M. on Friday, September 14, 2012, Rhodes emailed other administration officials as they prepared for U.N. ambassador Susan Rice's upcoming appearance on the Sunday morning talk shows. Rhodes's email set forth four goals, the second of which was "To underscore that these protests are rooted in an Internet video, and not a broader failure of policy." The video in question was an Internet trailer for *Innocence of Muslims*. The email from Rhodes also repeated an erroneous talking point: "The currently available information suggests that the demonstrations in Benghazi were spontaneously inspired by the protests at the US Embassy in Cairo and evolved into a direct assault against the US Consulate and subsequently its annex."

As officials soon learned, however, there never were any "demonstrations" in Benghazi—only a deadly attack launched by al Qaeda-affiliated terrorists. For this reason, some have viewed the protests elsewhere and the attack in Benghazi as being distinct. That is a mistake.

As the newly established House select committee investigating Benghazi moves forward with its work, it should look carefully at the events that transpired in Cairo, Tunis, Yemen, and elsewhere. In each case, known al Qaeda actors or their allies helped spark the protests. And in each instance they used the anti-Islam video as a pretext for inciting anti-American, pro-al Qaeda rage.

The first protest occurred outside of the U.S. embassy in Cairo on September 11, 2012. The Obama administration and much of the media were quick to portray the rally as a reaction to clips of *Innocence of Muslims*, which had been posted online a few months earlier. But this storyline ignored key facts.



*Ben Rhodes*

The video received little attention until an Islamist ideologue named Sheikh Khaled Abdullah broadcast clips of it, dubbed in Arabic, on the al-Nas satellite television channel in Egypt. As *Time* first reported, Abdullah's broadcast was a "dog whistle to the Salafists," who practice a puritanical form of Islam and seek to undo Western influence in Muslim lands. In other words, Abdullah sought to exploit the video for his own hardline Salafist purposes. Al Qaeda is a so-called Salafi-jihadist organization, meaning that its members share the same goals as other Salafists, but also promote violence to achieve their desired ends.

In short order, al Qaeda ideologues called for a mass protest in Egypt. Chief among them was Mohammed al Zawahiri, the younger brother of al Qaeda emir Ayman al Zawahiri. The younger Zawahiri is a terrorist operative and does not hide his allegiance to al Qaeda's ideology. After the Cairo embassy's walls were breached, Mohammed al Zawahiri bragged to the press about his role in instigating the demonstration. Zawahiri's allies joined in, too, and video of the Cairo protest shows several well-known al Qaeda jihadists inciting the crowd.

There is a simple fact about the Cairo demonstration that the Obama administration has been eager to ignore. The rally wasn't just anti-*Innocence of Muslims*; it was pro-al Qaeda. Dozens of al Qaeda flags were flown by the crowd. One of the black banners was raised to replace the Stars and Stripes above the embassy. And the protesters chanted, "Obama, Obama, we are all Osama!" The same chant would be heard at protests at other U.S. embassies in the days to come.

Not every protester who showed up at the Cairo rally was an al Qaeda supporter. But enough of them were. And the protest showed that men such as Mohammed al Zawahiri could use a previously obscure video to whip up anti-American outrage.

Eerily, the protests validated a key argument made by Ayman al Zawahiri, the head of al Qaeda, in a video released on September 10. The post-bin Laden al Qaeda master said that while the terrorist group has lost key leaders in its war with America, its ideology is spreading. That al Qaeda video cuts to a clip of Mohammed al Zawahiri proselytizing in Cairo just as the elder Zawahiri makes this argument. An al Qaeda flag flying over the U.S. embassy in Cairo the following day proved the point.

Ayman al Zawahiri also used his September 10 video to call on Libyans to avenge the death of Abu Yahya al Libi, a top al Qaeda operative killed months earlier by a U.S. drone. Within hours of the Cairo rally, a coalition of

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al Qaeda-linked jihadists stormed the U.S. compound in Benghazi, killing four Americans.

A bipartisan report published by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence on January 15 identifies the attackers as belonging to Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the Muhammad Jamal Network (MJN), and Ansar al Sharia. AQIM and AQAP are formal branches of al Qaeda, having sworn an oath of loyalty to Ayman al Zawahiri. Muhammad Jamal is a longtime subordinate of Zawahiri and was in contact with him in 2011 and 2012. Jamal's ties to al Qaeda's senior leadership and other parts of al Qaeda's international network have been formally recognized in terrorist designations by both the State Department and the United Nations. Ansar al Sharia in Derna, Libya, is led by an ex-Guantánamo detainee and al Qaeda operative, Sufian Ben Qumu. Some of Ben Qumu's men took part in the Benghazi attack.

On September 13, a protest outside the U.S. embassy in Sanaa, Yemen, was instigated by Shaykh Abd al-Majid al Zindani, who was designated an al Qaeda supporter by the Treasury Department in 2004. At the time, Zindani was described as an Osama bin Laden "loyalist" who "has a long history of working with" the al Qaeda founder, "notably serving as one of [bin Laden's] spiritual leaders." Zindani has helped al Qaeda in various ways, from recruiting new jihadists for its training camps to helping the terrorist organization purchase weapons. In December 2013, the Treasury Department reported that Zindani "has issued religious guidance in support of AQAP operations."

On September 14, 2012, Ansar al Sharia Tunisia led a mob that ransacked the U.S. embassy and a nearby American school in Tunis, causing millions of dollars in damage. The organization's head is a notorious jihadist named Seifallah Ben Hassine (aka Abu Iyad al Tunisi), who founded a terrorist organization in pre-9/11 Afghanistan in cooperation with al Qaeda's senior leaders.

According to the State Department's *Country Reports on Terrorism 2012*, Ben Hassine has been "implicated as the mastermind behind the September 14 attack on the US Embassy," which involved "a mob of 2,000-3,000" people, "including individuals affiliated with the militant organization Ansar al Sharia." And when the State Department added Ansar al Sharia Tunisia to the list of designated terrorist entities in January it noted that Ben Hassine's terrorist group "is ideologically aligned with al Qaeda and tied to its affiliates, including AQIM." Indeed, Ansar al Sharia Tunisia proudly announces that it has been loyal to al Qaeda since its founding.

The protests in Cairo, Tunis, and Sanaa were the most serious in terms of damage to American interests. In each case, Americans had to be protected from possible acts of violence. But al Qaeda-affiliated ideologues helped spark protests elsewhere, too.

On September 14, 2012, hundreds of protesters turned out for what was largely a peaceful protest in Amman, Jordan. They were led by Abu Sayyaf, who has played a significant role in al Qaeda's operations in Iraq and Syria. And in Lahore, Pakistan, Hafiz Saeed led hundreds more in a protest against the video. Saeed is the leader of Lashkar-e-Taiba, a Pakistani terrorist organization that is closely allied with al Qaeda. Saeed was in close contact with Osama bin Laden right up until the al Qaeda master's last days in Abbottabad, Pakistan. Saeed is considered so dangerous that the State Department has offered a $10 million reward for information leading to his capture.

Al Qaeda-linked organizations continued to use the video as a pretext for violence in the days following the Benghazi attack. On September 21, 2012, a group named Ansar Jerusalem launched a cross-border raid into Israel, killing an Israeli soldier. Ansar Jerusalem dubbed the attack a "raid of punishment," saying it was necessary "to discipline those insulting the beloved Prophet," according to a translation by the SITE Intelligence Group. Although there was no Jewish involvement in the production of *Innocence of Muslims*, Ansar Jerusalem blamed Jews anyway. The organization sought to tie its attack on Israel to the video, when in reality the video had nothing to do with Ansar Jerusalem's terrorism. Ansar Jerusalem first attacked Israel well before anyone was talking about *Innocence of Muslims*.

Ansar Jerusalem's true motivations, like those of the other groups responsible for assaulting U.S. diplomatic facilities in September 2012, are rooted in al Qaeda's jihadist ideology. The group has peppered its videos with clips of Ayman al Zawahiri. The head of al Qaeda has, in turn, repeatedly praised Ansar Jerusalem's attacks on Israel and inside Egypt. In a video released in January 2013, Ansar Jerusalem again tried to link its September 2012 terrorist attack in Israel to the video. This time, Ansar Jerusalem paid homage to Osama bin Laden. "If the freedom of your expression has no limit, then your chests should bear the freedom of our actions," bin Laden says in the video. Bin Laden said this in connection with the protests that arose following the publication of controversial cartoons of the prophet Muhammad in 2005.

The State Department added Ansar Jerusalem to the U.S. government's list of designated terrorist groups in April. Foggy Bottom noted that the group "shares some aspects of [al Qaeda's] ideology, but is not a formal AQ affiliate and generally maintains a local focus." Left unsaid was what aspects of al Qaeda's ideology the group doesn't share. And its "local" attacks are perfectly consistent with al Qaeda's global jihad. Ayman al Zawahiri has said as much.

Contrary to the talking points of Ben Rhodes and the Obama administration, the terrorist attack in Benghazi and the assaults on American embassies elsewhere in the fall of 2012 were a monumental "failure of policy." Rhodes and other administration officials, including President Obama, claimed during a presidential election year to have al Qaeda "on the run." Instead, groups that were, at a minimum, inspired by al Qaeda's ideology were growing and attacking American interests. ♦

# Steyer's War on Carbon

## Buying a Detroit Senate candidate.

**BY HENRY PAYNE**

*Detroit*

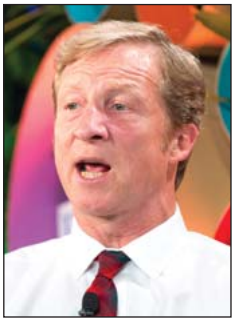
Countering the free-market political activism of the Koch brothers, green billionaire Thomas Steyer has pledged to spend $100 million in 2014 to elect an anti-carbon posse to Congress. Steyer's litmus test is opposition to the import of Canadian crude oil through the Keystone pipeline—an issue on which the former San Francisco hedge-fund manager won a victory this spring when the Obama administration further delayed the pipeline's construction after six years of study.

But the impact of Steyer's campaign extends well beyond a single pipeline. His War on Carbon is a war on blue-collar jobs in cities like Detroit, where Steyer is bankrolling Senate candidate Gary Peters. The Motown battleground is a microcosm of the Californian's larger threat to the U.S. energy sector and the communities it supports. All the players are present here: Canadian oil, Steyer money, green allies, an activist media, a politically financed Democratic candidate . . . even Koch Industries.

And in Detroit as with Keystone, the greens have been winning.

Peters is a Democratic congressman who is something of a political chameleon. A former Merrill Lynch financial adviser who once leaned right as a pro-Bush-tax-cut representative of wealthy, politically purple Oakland County north of Detroit, Peters was redistricted into solidly blue, liberal Detroit in 2012 and has transformed himself into an anti-tax-cut, leftist representative of Big Labor and Big Green. The three-term congressman was the only prominent Michigan politician to march with the Occupy Detroit movement in 2012.

Peters is on Steyer's radar as a fierce opponent of Canadian oil sands who is running to maintain the Democratic party's hold on retiring senator Carl Levin's seat. Last year, Peters successfully led the charge against the storage of pet coke—short for petroleum coke, a coal-like carbon byproduct of oil sands refining—in Detroit.



*Thomas Steyer*

"One of my main concerns with the Keystone pipeline is that we will be seeing piles of petcoke in a lot of other places in the United States, because it is a main byproduct of refining Canadian oil," Peters told London's *Guardian* last June. "What we are seeing in Detroit now will be dwarfed by more oil coming through here with Keystone. This is just a glimpse of that future reality."

Peters's opposition made him a darling of green activists and their media allies, from the *Detroit Free Press* to the *New York Times*. The resulting wave of bad press ultimately forced Koch Industries, which owns the pet coke, to send its business to neighboring Toledo, Ohio.

As night follows day, Peters's campaign won him an audience with Tom Steyer.

In February, aspiring-senator Peters accompanied Al Gore, Senate majority leader Harry Reid, and six other Democratic senators to Steyer's palatial residence overlooking the Pacific Ocean. The senators had all opposed Keystone despite its broad bipartisan support among their colleagues; Peters had opposed similar legislation passed by the House but blocked by Reid in the Senate.

The quid pro quo for Steyer's money? "If we're collectively going to put $100 million into this cycle, how much will go into key races depends on Keystone," said top Steyer political hand Chris Lehane later.

As an appetizer, Peters and the Steyer Seven were rewarded with a $400,000 contribution to the Senate Majority PAC. Since then, Senate Majority has spent nearly $1 million in Michigan attacking Peters's Senate opponent, Republican Terri Lynn Land. Another Steyer-funded group, American Sustainable Business Council, has begun running pro-Peters ads in western Michigan.

In April, President Obama, who made his own pilgrimage to Steyer's home a year ago, punted a decision on Keystone's permitting until after the 2014 elections. "This is rotten eggs for TransCanada and good news on Good Friday for those who oppose Keystone," Steyer cheered.

In truth, the war on Canadian oil sands is rotten eggs for America's working men and women.

"Congressman Peters has sold out the workers of Michigan to a liberal California billionaire," says a spokesperson for Land. "Keystone means more jobs, lower gas prices, and greater American energy independence, but to Gary Peters, opposing it means a political meal ticket."

The $2.2 billion expansion of Marathon Oil's Detroit refinery in 2012 to refine Canadian crude for the U.S. market was a boon not just to investment-starved Detroit—but also to businessmen like Noel and John Frye, who run Detroit Bulk Storage, a small, family-owned commodities storage business in Metro Detroit.

Koch chose the Frye brothers'

STUART ISETT / FORTUNE GREEN

*Henry Payne is the* Detroit News *auto critic and a syndicated political cartoonist.*

company to store much of the 600,000 tons of pet coke coming out of Marathon Oil for shipping to utilities, steelmakers, cement producers, and other plants across Canada and the upper Midwest. In turn, the Fryes chose Detroit's waterfront—with its excellent access to rail yards and deepwater loading—for its storage platform and potentially dozens of new jobs.

Yet the Fryes came under immediate assault from Peters, other Democrats like Rep. John Conyers, environmentalists, and a hysterical media.

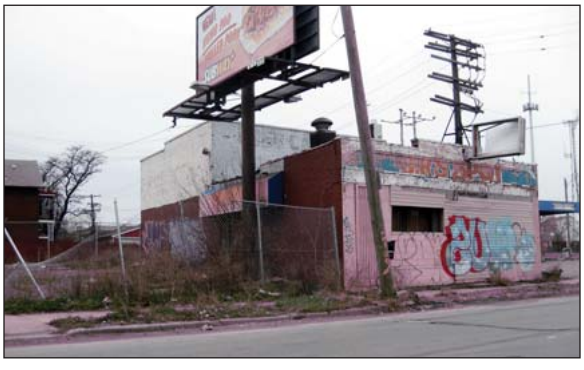
"A Black Mound of Canadian Oil Waste Is Rising Over Detroit," screamed a *New York Times* headline. Even after driving the storage jobs out of state, the green cabal has continued to harass Bulk Storage as it seeks to woo the pet coke contract back to Michigan and its River Rouge site immediately south of Detroit.

Activists piled into a Michigan Department of Environmental Quality hearing in March to oppose Bulk Storage's proposal. Peters demagogues that pet coke must be eliminated to protect "families and natural resources like the Great Lakes from the threat of contamination," calling for a federal investigation into its potential menace.

But the premise is absurd. Pet coke is virtually indistinguishable from coal. Millions of tons of these carbon-rich products course across the Great Lakes and America's waterways every day for use in energy production and heavy industry. The EPA considers coke, like coal, a nontoxic material that poses no threat under American clean air and water laws, says Michigan's DEQ spokesman Brad Wurfel. The depa rtment has approved Bulk Storage's pet coke operations for years (the Fryes previously stored pet coke from Koch's Chicago operation, which is also in the greens' crosshairs). The commodity is everywhere on Detroit's industrialized riverfront—from the metallurgical coke produced by DTE Energy that is used in U.S. Steel's neighboring mill to Marathon's coker, the huge refining unit at the tail end of oil processing. The cheap pet coke is burned in a downriver coal power plant, in Canadian power plants, and in other energy-intensive processes like Lafarge's Alpena, Michigan, cement plant, the nation's second-largest.

*Who could possibly let this . . .*

Until they lost the storage business to Toledo's Midwest Terminal, the Fryes handled the material in full compliance with state and federal regulations. Indeed, while Peters and his allies have scare-mongered about piles of supposedly toxic coke, the Fryes' River Rouge dock is piled high with a similar coal product. Its destination? Detroit, where it is burned in GM's Hamtramck plant to power the manufacturing of the greens' favorite electric car, the Chevy Volt.



*. . . endanger the beauty of this?*

"This campaign is about ignorance," says a frustrated Noel Frye.

It is also about stopping America's import of Canadian oil, an event that would have devastating effects on jobs. Steyer's political action committee, Next Gen Climate, says on its website that "Canada's tar sands are a carbon bomb that threatens our land, our health and the future of our families. To protect our environment and our communities, we must keep tar sands in the ground."

Rep. Peters's alliance with Steyer against oil sands threatens the 155 good-paying refinery jobs that Marathon's coker expansion brought to Detroit, the $230 million in cumulative tax revenue that the company estimates oil sands would bring to the congressman's bankrupt city by 2030—and Marathon's rumored plans to build a second Canadian oil-processing coker that promises thousands more construction jobs.

Peters's support of Steyer's radical agenda flies in the face of public opinion polls showing Michigan voters support the Keystone pipeline. It also flies in the face of claims that Democrats support the working man.

"Because of politics, the administration fails to stand up for working people and the men and women we represent," wrote Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA) general president Terry O'Sullivan in April. His members could gain hundreds of trades jobs from Keystone's construction. "Steyer has amplified the rhetoric of the environmental fringe aimed at tearing down the value of Americans who build things with their hands."

Detroit's waterfront is made for manufacturing and the transport of raw materials like coal and pet coke. To grow post-bankruptcy, the city must make the most of that resource. Never mind. Detroit's revival is less important to Michigan's would-be Democratic senator and his wealthy backers than their expansive campaign to shut down American coal plants and oil sands exploitation under the alarmist banner of global warming. ♦

HENRY PAYNE

# The Great Society at Fifty

*What LBJ wrought*

**By Nicholas Eberstadt**

May 22, 2014, marks the 50th anniversary of President Lyndon Baines Johnson's "Great Society" address, delivered at the spring commencement for the University of Michigan. That speech remains the most ambitious call to date by any president (our current commander in chief included) to use the awesome powers of the American state to effect a far-reaching transformation of the society that state was established to serve. It also stands as the high-water mark for Washington's confidence in the broad meliorative properties of government social policy, scientifically applied.

No less important, the Great Society pledge, and the fruit this would ultimately bear, profoundly recast the common understanding of the ends of governance in our country. The address heralded fundamental changes—some then already underway, others still only being envisioned—that would decisively expand the scale and scope of government in American life and greatly alter the relationship between that same government and the governed in our country today.

In his oration, LBJ offered a grand vision of what an American welfare state—big, generous, and interventionist—might accomplish. Difficult as this may be for most citizens now alive to recall, the United States in the early 1960s was not yet a modern welfare state: Our only nationwide social program in those days was the Social Security system, which provided benefits for workers' retirement and disability and for orphaned or abandoned children of workers. Johnson had gradually been unveiling this vision, starting with his declaration of a "War on Poverty" in his first State of the Union months earlier in 1964, just weeks after John F. Kennedy's assassination. In LBJ's words, "The Great Society rests on abundance and liberty for all. It demands an end to poverty and racial injustice, to which we are totally committed in our time. But that," he said, "is just the beginning."

The Great Society proposed to reach even further: to bring about wholesale renewal of our cities, beautification of our natural surroundings, vitalization of our educational system. All this, and much more—and the solutions to the many obstacles encountered in this great endeavor, we were told, would assuredly be found, since this undertaking would "assemble the best thought and the broadest knowledge from all over the world to find those answers for America."

Memorably, Johnson insisted that the constraints on achieving the goals he outlined were not availability of the national wealth necessary for the task or the uncertainties inherent in such complex human enterprises, but instead simply our country's resolve—whether we as a polity possessed sufficient "wisdom" to embark on the venture.

For a lesser politician, the Great Society speech might have amounted to little more than lofty rhetoric. For LBJ, it was an actual blueprint. With Johnson's consummate legislative skills, honed over six years as Senate majority leader, and with the coming 1964 electoral landslide for his party, the Great Society vision would be swiftly implemented: through civil rights laws, a panoply of new social programs (Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps, and so forth), new federal agencies (the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Transportation), and a vast array of other federal social projects.

What began under Johnson continued—or, more often, expanded—under all successive presidents. Not even Ronald Reagan managed to reverse the growth of government set in motion by that call for the Great Society. Thus, the American welfare state as we know it today is very largely the outcome of forces Johnson unleashed in the first half-year of his presidency. (The most appreciable addition to this apparatus over the past half-century is arguably Obamacare, the health care guarantees

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forged into law under the Affordable Care Act of 2010.)

Half a century later, how should we assess the Great Society? Any attempt at a comprehensive assessment would demand vastly more space than this essay, given the audacity and expanse of territory it laid claims to conquer—or, more precisely, to improve. Everywhere Johnson cast his eye, he seemed to find an America in need of improvement: Environmental protection, community development, the arts—all of these and more he flagged in this one short speech as legitimate new areas for federal government involvement under the banner of the Great Society. We will confine our assessment here to that enormous first pillar of the Great Society: "abundance" for all and the "end to poverty" to which Johnson committed us.

*Lyndon Johnson visiting a Kentucky family, 1964*

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## I

The War on Poverty was grounded in a set of presumptions about our economy and society that were widely shared at the time by the country's opinion leaders and decision-making elites. American prosperity was, in this postwar era, finally here to stay—and continuing economic advancement could be all but taken for granted. Indeed, the helmsmen of our national economy—groups like the President's Council of Economic Advisers—knew so much about how to manage the workings of the magnificent U.S. macroeconomy that they could seriously talk about fine-tuning its performance.

The problem of poverty amid general affluence, for its part, was mainly a technocratic question—to be answered boldly through straightforward, official redirection of national resources to fill the country's "income gap." Some special programs, however, were also required for addressing conditions in pockets of lingering social disadvantage (urban slums, Appalachia, the Mississippi Delta, and other blighted locales). Guided by experts from the academy and elsewhere, these social programs could, with time, systematically convert virtually all of the underprivileged into full participants in the American Dream.

The conceit that possessed the initial troop of Great Society poverty warriors, in short, was that the challenge inherent in the project of eliminating poverty in America was not in essence very different from that of the project for sending a man to the moon. Both tasks could be successfully engineered by a confident government with sufficient resources, know-how, and commitment behind it. This outlook exemplifies what Friedrich Hayek termed "scientism," pure and simple: misapplication of techniques and theories from the natural sciences to other, patently unsuitable realms.

The scientistic fallacies that animated the original War on Poverty did not long survive their encounters with real, live human beings, as the fates of the Office of Economic Opportunity and other experiments would attest. Nevertheless, official antipoverty programs and policies went on to flourish—at least by the administrative metric of resource expenditures. In 2012, nearly $700 billion in means-tested transfers of money, goods, and services were obtained by recipients of antipoverty benefits. And this does not include the bureaucratic overhead and personnel costs for such programs. At this writing, annual government outlays for U.S. antipoverty programs may have reached, or even exceeded, the trillion-dollar mark.

And programs expressly devised for combating poverty were only one component within the overall schema of social policies intended to redress material want and economic insecurity. For the Great Society also added Medicare to the structure of the American welfare state and arguably prepared the way for more generous, and inventive, outlays from the existing Social Security program. All in all, inflation-adjusted government transfers for social welfare programs soared more than tenfold between 1964 and 2013, and real per capita welfare state transfers were six-plus times higher in 2013 than 50 years earlier. Numerous critics at home and abroad fault the contemporary U.S. social welfare system for what they take to be its punitive austerity. Nevertheless, the share of overall personal income from social welfare transfers jumped from 5.8 percent in 1964 to 17.0 percent in 2013; more than one dollar in six within the overall American household budget thus comes from government entitlement programs, redistributed through social welfare guarantees.

Since 1964, the welfare state has devoted considerable resources to assuring or improving the public's living

standards—something like $20 trillion in inflation-adjusted dollars through antipoverty programs alone, by one calculation. What sort of effect have these programs had on deprivation and its attendant miseries?

If we were to judge the performance of our welfare state solely by the statistical measure invented to gauge national performance in the War on Poverty—the "poverty rate"—we would have to conclude the whole effort has been a miserable and unmitigated failure. The true picture, however, is rather more complex than that same poverty rate is capable of depicting, though not necessarily much more heartening.

II

According to the official poverty rate, the proportion of our population below the poverty line was dropping rapidly in the years immediately before the War on Poverty was fully underway. In the seven years between 1959 and 1966, according to the Census Bureau, the proportion of our country living in poverty dropped by about a third, from 22.4 to 14.7 percent. Since then, however, the official poverty rate has been essentially stuck. It reached an all-time low of 11.1 percent in 1973, in the Nixon era, then drifted uncertainly back upward. For the year 2012, the most recent such data available, the national poverty rate was 15.0 percent—slightly higher, in other words, than back in 1966.

**Consumption-focused assessments of American poverty underscore a significant point: Poverty in America—the sort of material deprivation people knew back in the 1960s—has been all but eliminated.**

The official poverty picture looks even worse the more closely one focuses on it. According to those same official numbers, the poverty rate for all families was no lower in 2012 than in 1966. The poverty rate for American children under 18 is higher now than it was then. The poverty rate for the working-age population (18-64) is also higher now than back then. The poverty rate for whites is higher now than it was then. Poverty rates for Hispanic Americans have been tracked only since 1972—but these likewise are higher today than back then. Shocking as this may sound, only a few groups within our society—most importantly, Americans 65 and older and African Americans of all ages—registered any appreciable improvement in poverty rates between 1966 and 2012.

If those official numbers reflected reality in America, all this would be cause for the gravest alarm. After all, the official poverty rate is meant to count the percentage of the population living on incomes below a threshold set back in the early 1960s and adjusted since then only to keep up with inflation. That threshold was meant to provide only a severe and stringent household budget—as stringency was envisioned half a century ago. But of course, America is a vastly richer society today. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, real per capita disposable income in our country in 2012 was two and a half times the 1966 level. And according to data compiled by the Federal Reserve, private wealth grew even faster over that same period.

Taken together, these soundings would seem to conjure up the ghastly image of "immiserating growth," that fatal tendency of modern capitalist systems, at least according to some postwar neo-Marxian theorists. But the proposition that a higher fraction of Americans are stuck in absolute poverty today than nearly half a century ago cannot be taken seriously. It is preposterous on its very face.

Consider that the health of Americans of all ages is markedly better now than then: life expectancy at birth rose by more than eight years between 1966 and 2010 alone and is higher at every age these days—even for centenarians. Americans are not only healthier, but also much more educated—in 1966, nearly a third of adults 25 or older had a grade school education or less, compared to just 5 percent in 2013. And Americans are more likely now to be working in paid jobs: Despite the terrible 2008 economic crash, the percentage of employed adults 20 and older was still higher in 2013 than in 1966 (61 percent versus 57 percent).

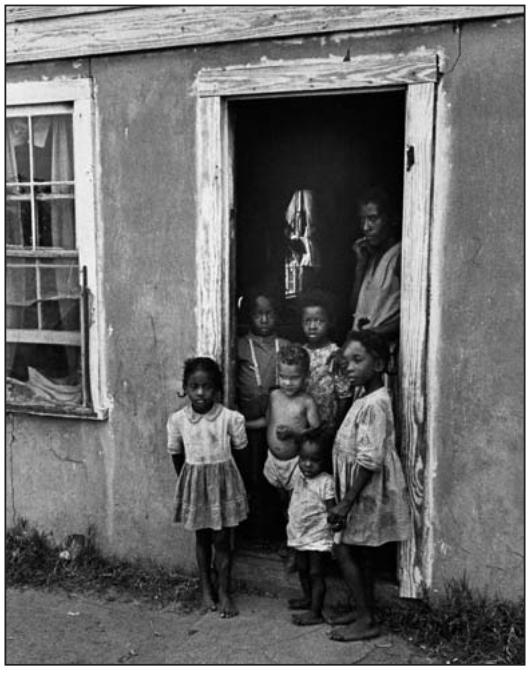
The idea that such a population would at the same time suffer a higher incidence of absolute poverty does not even pass the laugh test. This picture is an illusion, a distorted reflection from the statistical variant of a funhouse mirror, and the funhouse mirror in question is the poverty rate itself. The poverty rate is a highly misleading measure of living standards and material deprivation—incorrigibly misleading, in fact.

The central and irresolvable trouble with the official poverty rate is that it presumes an immediate and exact equivalence between income levels and consumption levels—so that any home in any year with a reported income level below the poverty line must perforce also be constrained to sub-poverty-line spending power. In real-world America, by contrast, income is a poor predictor of spending power for lower-income groups at any given point in time—and that predictive power has dramatically worsened over the course of our postwar era.

In 1960-61, according to the BLS Consumer Expenditure Survey, the bottom one-fourth of American homes spent about 12 percent more than their pretax reported incomes each year. By 2011, according to that same survey, those in the lowest quintile were spending nearly

125 percent more than their reported pretax incomes and nearly 120 percent more than their reported posttax, post-transfer incomes.

This growing discrepancy between income and expenditures on the part of the poorer strata in recent decades is by no means impossible to explain. Not least important, households are subject to greater year-to-year earnings swings than in the past and have greater wherewithal (through borrowing, asset drawdowns, and other means) to buffer their consumption when they hit a bad year, or even a couple of bad years. But this phenomenon also means that people reporting ostensibly poverty-level incomes are less and less likely to be consigned to poverty-level living standards, as that standard was originally conceived in the early 1960s. Increasing noncash transfers of means-tested public benefits (including, especially, health care) only further widen the gap between reported income and actual consumption for America's "poverty population."



*Poverty, 1966: A Virginia family of eight living in a house without running water or plumbing*

Thus, the actual living conditions of people counted as living "in poverty" in America today bear very little resemblance to those of Americans enumerated as poor in the first official government count attempted in 1965. By 2011, for example, average per capita housing space for people in poverty was higher than the U.S. average for 1980, and crowding (more than one person per room) was less common for the 2011 poor than for the nonpoor in 1970. More than three-quarters of the 2011 poor had access to one or more motor vehicles, whereas nearly three-fifths were without an auto in 1972-73. Refrigerators, dishwashers, washers and dryers, and many other appliances were more common in officially impoverished homes in 2011 than in the typical American home of 1980 or earlier. Microwaves were virtually universal in poor homes in 2011, and DVD players, personal computers, and home Internet access are now typical in them—amenities not even the richest U.S. households could avail themselves of at the start of the War on Poverty. Further, Americans counted as poor today are manifestly healthier, better nourished (or overnourished), and more schooled than their predecessors half a century ago.

To be clear: The poor in America are not well-to-do. They are poorer than the rest of America. This has not changed. What has changed is their standard of living—which has risen markedly since the beginning of the War on Poverty, as have living standards for all the rest of us. Work by economists like Daniel Slesnick at the University of Texas, Bruce Meyer at the University of Chicago, and James X. Sullivan at the University of Notre Dame demonstrates that an ever-smaller share of our country subsists on *consumption levels* demarcated by our old, official, 1960s-era poverty line.

Consumption-focused assessments of the poverty problem are stunningly different from our official numbers. In a recent research paper, for example, Meyer and Sullivan indicate that such "consumption poverty" afflicted less than 4 percent of the population in 2008. In the wake of the 2008 crash, "consumption poverty" rose—but as of 2010, when postcrash conditions were possibly most dire, just 3.7-4.5 percent of America was subject to it, according to their calculations.

This research underscores a significant point, all too often misunderstood in both policy and intellectual circles today. Poverty in America—the sort of material deprivation people knew back in the 1960s—has been all but eliminated. This should not be a surprise, considering both the many intervening decades of general economic advancement and the tremendous outlays of government antipoverty funds, currently averaging about $9,000 in total expenses and $7,000 in transfer value per year for every person in our nation designated as a recipient in need.

We cannot say the War on Poverty was a *necessary* condition for the near-complete abolition of 1960s-style poverty, insofar as we cannot know what the rate of progress would have been without those efforts. But we can say that the War on Poverty has proved to be a *sufficient* condition for achieving this great objective.

## III

So the long War on Poverty has indeed managed to eradicate 1960s-style poverty from our midst, or very nearly so—even if our federal authorities today are not competent to describe this accomplishment (or, seemingly, even recognize the accomplishment in the first place).

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This is an important fact in favor of the War on Poverty—but other important facts must be considered as well, all seemingly weighing on the other side of the ledger. For the institutionalization of antipoverty policy has been attended by the rise and spread of an ominous "tangle of pathologies" in the society whose ills antipoverty policies were intended to heal. Those pathologies appear to be conjoined with antipoverty policies; in some cases, antipoverty policies may possibly create them, but irrespective of the causality at work, they are clearly very largely financed today by antipoverty policies.

The phrase "tangle of pathologies" harks back to the famous Moynihan Report of 1965, which warned of the crisis of the family then gathering for black America. That report was criticized, even viciously denounced, at the time, but in retrospect much of it seems positively prophetic.

The Moynihan argument also assumed that the troubles impending for black America were unique—a consequence of the singular historical burdens that black Americans had endured. That argument was not only plausible at the time, but persuasive. Yet today that same "tangle of pathology" can no longer be described as characteristic of just one group. Quite the contrary: These pathologies are evident throughout all of America today, regardless of race or ethnicity. Three of the most disturbing of these many entangled pathologies are welfare dependency, the flight from work, and family breakdown.

**Historically, non-Hispanic whites have had the lowest dependence on public aid of any major racial or ethnic group delineated within official statistics—yet by 2012, nearly 1 in 5 nonpoor Anglo men ages 25-44, and about 1 in 11 under 65, nonpoor, and living alone, were on the government benefit rolls.**

**Welfare Dependency**. Unlike, say, an old-age pension awarded after a lifetime of work, a bestowal of charity or aid to the indigent is a transaction that establishes a relationship of dependence. As a people who have prized their independence, financial as well as political, Americans throughout history have attempted to avoid dependence on "relief" and other handouts. Recovery from the Great Depression was corroborated by the great decline in the numbers of Americans on public aid: In 1951, the commissioner of Social Security was pleased to report that just 3.8 percent of Americans were receiving public aid, down from 11.5 percent as recently as 1940. But with the War on Poverty and its successor programs, such dependency has become routine. The United States today is richer than at any previous juncture—yet, paradoxically, more Americans than ever before are officially judged to be in need. Welfare dependence is at an all-time high and by all indications set to climb in the years ahead.

Perhaps tellingly, the U.S. government did not get around to collecting data and publishing figures on the proportion of the population dependent on need-based benefits on a systematic basis until nearly two decades after the start of the War on Poverty, during the Reagan era. By then (1983), nearly one American in five (18.8 percent) lived in a home taking in one or more means-tested benefits.

By 2012, according to one Census Bureau count, the proportion was almost one in three: 32.3 percent and "only" 29.4 percent if school lunches were excluded from the tally. This still left more than 90 million Americans applying for and accepting aid from government antipoverty programs. But only 33 million people from America's "poverty population" were enrolled in those same means-tested programs. In other words, nearly twice as many Americans above the poverty line as below it were getting antipoverty benefits. Evidently, the American welfare state has been defining deprivation upward.

In the 1990s, a bipartisan political consensus enacted "welfare reform"—but it would be misleading to overestimate the effect of that adjustment on the long-term rise in dependency. That "welfare reform" took aim at just one especially controversial and unpopular program: aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), a facet of the original Social Security legislation, but one that had been allowed to mutate into a vehicle for financing unwed motherhood and intergenerational dependency.

AFDC's reach was always limited—in 1983 only 4.2 percent of Americans lived in homes receiving aid from it, according to Census Bureau estimates—and that fraction has been pared down to just 2.0 percent in 2011. On the other hand, most of the other means-tested programs have extended their reach over those same years: public housing, income transfers from AFDC alternatives, food stamps, Medicaid, and more. Since the advent of "welfare reform," the proportion of the American population relying on at least some entitlement benefit from the government has jumped by another 10 percentage points.

By 2012, according to one Census Bureau count, significant demographic subgroups within the American population were well along the path to means-tested majorities—that is to say, toward the point where more members than not of the groups in question would be claiming benefits from government antipoverty programs. More than

47 percent of all black Americans and fully 48 percent of Hispanic Americans of all ages were reckoned to be taking home means-tested benefits (excluding subsidized school lunches from the tally, here and in the rest of this discussion). More than 60 percent of black and Hispanic children, and nearly 43 percent of all American children, were depending on antipoverty programs for at least some support. Dependency was less pronounced among children of Asian Americans and non-Hispanic whites, but only to a degree—for both those groups, the ratio was close to 30 percent. In all of the aforementioned cases, most of the beneficiaries drawing on government poverty program resources were men, women, and children *not* officially counted as poor.

In affluent democracies, children are not expected to be self-supporting—nor, necessarily, are their mothers. For men in the prime of life, expectations have always been different. In this sense, the most revealing measure of the spread of dependence is the declining financial independence of working-age American men. Among men 25 to 44 years of age, more than 25 percent lived in homes taking aid from antipoverty programs by 2012. For nonpoor men those same ages, the ratio was over 20 percent. While the proclivity was lower for working-age men living independently from families, nonetheless nearly 1 in 10 adult American men under 65 living alone were seeking and accepting need-based public aid by 2012.

The reach of dependence is perhaps best highlighted by its inroads into the parts of American society traditionally least ensnared by it. Historically, non-Hispanic whites have had the lowest dependence on public aid of any major racial or ethnic group delineated within official statistics—yet by 2012, nearly 1 in 5 nonpoor Anglo men ages 25-44, and about 1 in 11 under 65, nonpoor, and living alone, were on the government benefit rolls.

**The Flight from Work.** Although a higher fraction of Americans 20 and older are working today than at the start of the War on Poverty (61.2 percent in January 2014 versus 57.2 percent in January 1964), and though labor force participation rates are likewise higher today than 50 years ago, these overall figures mask two distinct tendencies.

On one hand, adult women are much more likely to be working or looking for work today than two generations ago. Labor force participation rates for women 20 and older are fully 20 percentage points higher today than in early 1964 (58.6 percent in January 2014 versus 38.5 percent in January 1964). A lifestyle that includes at least some paid employment has become the norm for American women over the past two generations.

On the other hand, men have been a diminishing presence within the workforce—and not only thanks to the rising share of women who seek to work. The proportion of men 20 and older who are employed has dramatically and almost steadily dropped since the start of the War on Poverty, falling from 80.6 percent in January 1964 to 67.6 percent 50 years later. No less remarkable: The proportion of adult men in the labor force—either working or looking for work—has likewise plunged over those same years, from 84.2 percent then to 71.9 percent today. Put another way: Our country has seen a surge of men making a complete exit from the workforce over the past 50 years. Whereas fewer than 16 percent of men 20 or older neither had work nor were looking for it in early 1964, the corresponding share today is more than 28 percent.

In purely arithmetic terms, the main reason American men today are not working is not unemployment. Rather, it is because they have opted out of the labor market altogether. For every adult man who is between jobs and looking for new work, more than five are neither working nor looking for employment.

Even in what should be the prime of work life, this male flight from work has been apparent. Between early 1964 and early 2014, the proportion of civilian, noninstitutionalized men completely out of the labor force nearly quadrupled—from 3.2 percent to 12.6 percent. By the same token, the corresponding share of nonworkers for men 35-44 years of age more than tripled over those same years, from 2.5 percent in January 1964 to 9.0 percent in January 2014.

The withdrawal of progressively greater proportions of men—including relatively young men—from the U.S. workforce seems especially paradoxical when we consider the major improvements in health (as reflected in life expectancy) and educational attainment (as reflected in mean years of schooling) for the cohorts under consideration over those same years. All other things being equal, one might have assumed these changes would make men *more* capable of working, not *less*.

It is noteworthy that the male flight from work for prime working-age groups, striking as it has been, did not proceed uninterrupted over the entire postwar period. No, it only took place after the War on Poverty commenced. Between early 1948—when the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) began the current system for tracking workforce data—and early 1964, a period stretching more than a decade and a half, the proportion of unworking men 25-54 years of age remained essentially unchanged. The same was true for men 35-44 years of age. For men 25-34, the labor force participation rate actually rose from 96.1 percent in January 1948 to 97.1 percent in January 1964. Only since the War on Poverty began to offer alternatives to work for able-bodied men have we seen a major migration of men in prime working ages out of the time-established path of work.

As long as such data have routinely been collected, labor-force participation rates have been lowest for black Americans and highest for Hispanic Americans; rates

for Asian Americans and Anglos have been in-between, close to the national average. There may be many reasons for the poor labor force performance of black American men—among them, lower educational levels, collapse of work opportunities in urban centers, and possibly continuing variants of discrimination as well. But ever since the War on Poverty, the flight from work among African-American men has merely preceded the same flight for Anglos. Although the black American labor force participation rate for men of peak working age (25-54) was sharply lower than that of Anglos for 2013, it was a bit higher in 1973 than the Anglo rate would be 40 years later. The same is true for men in their 20s, 30s, and 40s. The strange and disturbing fact is that a lower share of Anglo men today are working or looking for work than was true for their African-American counterparts four decades earlier—notwithstanding all the disadvantages borne by their black counterparts in those earlier years.

**Family Breakdown.** In the early postwar era, the norm for childbearing and child-rearing was the married two-parent household. Norm and reality were not identical, of course—but for the country as a whole, the gap was not immense. Illegitimacy was on the rise in the early postwar era, but as late as 1963, on the eve of the War on Poverty, more than 93 percent of American babies were coming into the world with two married parents. According to the 1960 census, nearly 88 percent of children under 18 were then living with two parents. That fraction was slightly higher than it had been before World War II, thanks in part to improving survival chances for parents and the correspondingly diminished risk of orphanhood.

Unfortunately, the rise of the new welfare policies inaugurated by the War on Poverty coincided with a marked change in family formation patterns in America. Out-of-wedlock births exploded. Divorce and separation soared. The fraction of children living in two-parent homes commenced a continuing downward spiral. These new patterns are so pervasive, and so politically sensitive, that some today object even to describing the phenomenon as "family breakdown." But the phenomenon has swept through all of American society over the past 50 years, leaving no ethnic group untouched.

Pre-Great Society statistics on birth outside marriage may understate the true extent of nonmarital child bearing, given the stigma that attached to illegitimacy in those days. Be that as it may, for the quarter-century extending from 1940 to 1965, official data recorded a rise in the fraction of births to unmarried women from 3.8 to 7.7 percent. Over the following quarter-century—1965 to 1990—out-of-wedlock births jumped from 7.7 percent of the

nationwide total to 28.0 percent. Twenty-two years later (the most recent available data are for the year 2012), America's overall out-of-wedlock birth ratio had surpassed 40 percent.

By 2013, nearly 32 percent of America's children were living in arrangements other than a two-parent home. Moreover, given current trends in cohabitation, divorce, and remarriage, not all children living in two-parent homes nowadays are with both their biological parents—and even where they are, those biological parents are not always married. A Census Bureau study for 2009 reported just under 69 percent of America's children lived in two-parent homes that year—but only 60 percent were biological offspring of both parents in their home, and only 57 percent were with both married biological parents. The corresponding percentages are presumably lower today.

The two-married-parent family construct has always been frailest among African Americans (though the reasons behind that fragility continue to be debated, sometimes rancorously). The reported illegitimacy ratio for nonwhites gradually rose from 17 percent in 1940 to 22 percent in 1959. In 1960, one in five nonwhite children was living with a lone mother. By 2012, more than 72 percent of black births were outside marriage, and in 2013 more than half of black children were living only with their mother—many more than the 37 percent who were in a two-parent home.

But out-of-wedlock birth ratios and living arrangements for children have been changing in the rest of America as well since the start of the War on Poverty—and radically. Among Hispanic Americans, more than 30 percent of children were in single-parent homes by 2013—and well over half were born out of marriage by 2012. By 2009, fewer than 60 percent of Latino children were living with both biological parents, and fewer than 55 percent lived with biological parents who were married. Corresponding data are not available for 1964, but these figures are much higher than for 1980, when 21 percent were in single-parent homes, and fewer than 25 percent were born outside of marriage.

The collapse of the traditional family structure has been underway among the majority population of non-Hispanic whites as well. For Anglos, there were few signs of impending family breakdown in the generation before the War on Poverty; between 1940 and 1963, the out-of-wedlock birth ratio increased, but only from 2 percent to 3 percent, and in 1960, just 6 percent of white children lived with single mothers. In 2012, the proportion of out-of-wedlock births was 29 percent—nearly 10 times as high as it was just before the War on Poverty. By 2013, more than 18 percent of Anglo children were in single-mother homes—three times the proportion before the War on Poverty—and over one-quarter lived outside two-parent homes. By 2009, less than two-thirds of Anglo children were living with both biological parents, and fewer than five out of eight were with biological parents who were married to each other. Thus, Anglo whites today register illegitimacy ratios markedly higher than those ratios were for African Americans when Moynihan called attention to the crisis in the black family—and proportions of single-parent children look eerily comparable.

The reason the Moynihan Report sounded an alarm about family trends for black America was that a very large body of research already existed in the 1960s concerning the manifold disadvantages conferred on children who grew up in what were then called "broken homes." Over the intervening decades, a small library of additional studies have accumulated to corroborate and document the tragic range of disadvantages that such children face. This is not to say that children from alternative living arrangements cannot end up thriving—obviously, many do; it is, rather, that their odds of suffering adverse educational, health, behavioral, psychological, and other outcomes are much higher. These disadvantages are starkly evident even after controlling for socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and race.

One of the many risks children of broken homes confront is a much higher chance of becoming a violent offender in our criminal justice system—and, more broadly, a much higher risk of being arrested for crime. Since the launch of the War on Poverty, criminality in America has taken an unprecedented upward turn within our nation. Although reported rates of crime victimization—including murder and other violent crimes—have been falling for two decades, the percentage of Americans behind bars has continued to rise (though it appears to have peaked—or at least temporarily paused—since 2009).

As of year-end 2010, more than 5 percent of all black men in their 40s and nearly 7 percent of those in their 30s were in state or federal prisons, with additional numbers incarcerated in local jails awaiting trial or sentencing. For Latinos, the corresponding numbers were more than 2 percent and nearly 3 percent. Among Anglos, slightly more than 1 percent of all men in their 30s were sentenced offenders in state or federal prisons—a lower share than for these others, but a higher proportion than in earlier generations. This huge convict population may be described in many different ways—but one way to describe most of them is as children of the earthquake that shook family structure in the era of expansive antipoverty policies.

Surveying this new American landscape of dependency, voluntary male joblessness, and family decay, an unavoidable question confronts our society: How are these perverse features of our daily life related to the rise of the modern American welfare state? Is it simply a coincidence that welfare dependence, the male flight from work,

and accelerated family breakdown all happened to coincide with the sustained domestic policy shift heralded by the Great Society? As philosophers and statisticians are careful to caution, conjuncture does not establish causation. But this broad and important conjuncture is surely thought-provoking and invites both deep reflection and careful examination.

With respect to welfare dependency, cause and effect are least open to debate. In this particular instance, supply has seemingly created its own demand. Much greater proportions of Americans below the poverty line are seeking and accepting means-tested benefits today than in the past, irrespective of ethnicity or family structure. The culture has changed—or has been changed—by the availability of public benefits that can be obtained by, so to speak, pleading poverty. Moreover, a progressively greater share of Americans above the poverty line is becoming accustomed to applying for and obtaining money, resources, or services from government antipoverty programs. The stigma of depending on what used to be called "relief" is no longer as acute and widespread as it was before the War on Poverty: to which many might say, rightly so. "Entitlements" are benefits to which all citizens are in principle legally entitled. But the plain fact is that popular mores concerning the propriety of taking government help for the needy have shifted tremendously over the past 50 years.

Causality is much less clear-cut when it comes to the adult male flight from work and the erosion of the married two-parent family norm. In these two cases, it could be that the new welfare state was simply stepping into a void opened by social trends propelled by other, unrelated factors: among these, an increasing social preference for leisure, decreasing tolerance for the inconveniences demanded by child-rearing and long-term familial commitments, and changes in technology (including birth control technology). Nor is the fracturing of the modern family unique to postwar America. Far from it: As Francis Fukuyama, among others, has pointed out, almost every Western industrial democracy has undergone a similar sort of earthquake within the family since the 1960s. Only one of those societies was also witness to the War on Poverty: namely, ours.

For these and other reasons, the Great Society's role in modern America's social pathologies seems fated for endless and inconclusive debate. What is indisputable, however, is that the new American welfare state facilitated these trends by helping to finance them: by providing support for working-age men who are no longer seeking employment and for single women with children who would not be able to maintain independent households without government aid. Regardless of the origins of the flight from work and family breakdown, the War on Poverty and successive welfare policies have made these modern tendencies more feasible as mass phenomena in our country today.

Suffice it to say that none of these troubling mass phenomena was envisioned when the War on Poverty commenced. Just the opposite—President Johnson saw the War on Poverty as a campaign to bring dependency on government handouts to an eventual end, not as a means of perpetuating them for generations to come. He made this very clear three months after his Great Society speech at the signing ceremony for some of his initial War on Poverty legislation, when he announced:

> We are not content to accept the endless growth of relief rolls or welfare rolls. . . . Our American answer to poverty is not to make the poor more secure in their poverty but to reach down and to help them lift themselves out of the ruts of poverty and move with the large majority along the high road of hope and prosperity. The days of the dole in our country are numbered.

Held against this ideal, the actual unfolding of America's domestic antipoverty policies can be seen only as a tragic failure. Dependence on government relief, in its many modern versions, is more widespread today, and possibly also more habitual, than at any time in our history. To make matters much worse, such aid has become integral to financing lifestyles and behavioral patterns plainly destructive to our commonwealth—and on a scale far vaster than could have been imagined in an era before such antipoverty aid was all but unconditionally available.

The Great Society was by no means a wholesale failure. America has two great achievements to celebrate and take pride in from the Great Society. That agenda finally, and decisively, brought an end to the long, hateful stain of legalized racial discrimination within our nation. And it has all but eliminated the sort of material deprivation that tens of millions of Americans in the early 1960s still suffered.

But the Great Society was a project that ended up at war with itself. Modern America has been shaped by the irreconcilable contradiction between its vision of human flourishing, on the one hand, and the particulars of the antipoverty programs that the Johnson administration and subsequent administrations promoted and financed, on the other. The former promised at long last to include all Americans, irrespective of race, as full citizens under the embrace of the exceptional legal and economic arrangements afforded through the American political tradition. The latter subverted that same promise by tacitly encouraging, and overtly subsidizing, an alternative to financial self-reliance, work, and intact family: the very social basis upon which the American experiment was built. Fifty years later, daily life in modern America continues to be shaped by the conflicted legacy of this fateful project. ♦

*'Evening at Kuerners' (1970)*

# Terror in the Abstract

## *How Andrew Wyeth saw the world, and himself.*

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

Was Andrew Wyeth so celebrated because he was so misunderstood, or did it work the other way around? His reputation seems ill-fitting, whether you consider him one of the great American painters of the last century, as many laymen and a few professionals do, or a kitsch monger and conman, as many more professionals and a few sniffy, wised-up laymen do. The question comes up whenever museum curators swivel their sights toward his vast body of work—thousands upon thousands of paintings and sketches, spanning a 72-year public career—and put on another exhibit to try to sort him out, as the gifted Nancy K. Anderson and Charles Brock have done at the National Gallery of Art in Washington.

**Andrew Wyeth**
*Looking Out, Looking In*
National Gallery of Art
Through November 30

The show takes as its premise Wyeth's career-long insistence that the most famous figurative painter of his time—that would be Wyeth himself—was in truth an abstract artist: "A lot of people say I've brought realism back," he said in the mid-1960s, as he approached the peak of his fame. "I honestly consider myself an abstractionist." The bone beneath the flesh, the frame subtending the barn and springhouse—these were what he wanted his audience to see and grapple with, not the surface of things, even when the surfaces were rendered as painstakingly as Wyeth's. (The best of them are as finely grained as a Dürer print.) He used his realism, he said, as a kind of come-on—a way to get the folks into the tent: "They're attracted by the realism, then begin to feel the abstraction."

Wyeth gave countless interviews and said countless things, many of them con-

ANDREW WYETH / PRIVATE COLLECTION

*Andrew Ferguson is a senior editor at* The Weekly Standard.

tradictory, and he tended his public presentation with the care of a skilled marketer. But if he truly considered himself a cunning Jackson Pollock in disguise, his reputation must be one of the most successful cases of mistaken identity since the Scarlet Pimpernel. Fans and critics admired or condemned him for the same reasons: He was a painter of accessible paintings filled with identifiable objects and people, often set in wintry rural settings, rendered more or less faithfully in muted colors or shades of dun and ochre. He was loved or hated or ignored because he was a painter whose paintings were easy to grasp.

Thanks to Anderson and Brock, though, with "Looking Out, Looking In" we can begin to see how deceptive the accessibility is. Wyeth died in 2009, at the age of 91, and even now it's hard to convey to a younger generation how famous he was: He was the personification of American art in the popular mind. His painting *Christina's World*, bought by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1949, rivals *American Gothic* as the least avoidable and most lampooned American artwork of the last century. He made the cover of *Time* twice and of *Newsweek* twice, once during the same week. (Trust us, youngsters; this was a big deal.) Television networks filmed specials about him and broadcast them to large and welcoming audiences.

By the mid-1990s, a new Wyeth painting would sell for $1 million at a minimum, topping out at $3 million. Snoopy, a character even less avoidable than Wyeth, boasted of the Wyeth painting he hung in his doghouse. Politicians pawed at him (Wyeth, not Snoopy). President Nixon put on a one-man Wyeth exhibit at the White House. President Eisenhower asked Wyeth to paint his portrait. He won the Medal of Freedom from President Kennedy, the Congressional Gold Medal from President Reagan, and the National Medal of Arts from the second President Bush. His home in the Brandywine Valley crossroads of Chadds Ford, where he was born, died, and lived all his life, became, and still is, a tourist destination.

His immense popularity with the general public is best understood as an expression of relief—a freeing of frustrated aesthetic instinct. For decades after World War II ordinary people who liked visual art had been searching for visual art they could like. The pickings were slim. Would-be art lovers were offered high-concept works that were not, to the layman, at all easy to like. We'll call this "modernism" for simplicity's sake. Pollock, Mark Rothko, Frank Stella, and the other modernists traveled with a phalanx of hyperarticulate critics whose job it was to convince the public that realistic depictions of scenes and objects in a work of art were simply boorish, unsophisticated—sentimental, even. "Sentimental" is a word often used by sophisticated critics in all the arts: It is a technical term that literally means "bad." ("Luminous," if you were wondering, means "good.")

Of course, the very qualities that repelled critics were the qualities that soothed and charmed Wyeth's untutored admirers. And their affection went beyond the paintings. As modernism quickly became the house style of Western art, Wyeth's most ardent fans sensed that it was a package deal. Modernism asked something more from them than simply to accept abstract forms as higher-order artistic expressions. As one art-world maven explained to Richard Meryman, Wyeth's biographer:

> Wyeth and that [realistic] style in some way have represented all the stuff out there that artists had been fighting against. The identification of the middle-class values as the enemy of the true imagination . . . has been around since the beginning of modernism: the belief that there was something fundamentally inauthentic about a certain way of living and a certain kind of values, something repressive and self-deceived.

Wyeth became a symbol of this "narrowness," not merely as a painter but as an embodiment of what was wrong with the American middle class, its complacency and piddling aspirations. He was often called a nostalgist, a pretend artist looking backward even as the vanguard struggled heroically forward. Critics foreswore the task of probing his art—there wasn't much there to work with, after all—in favor of probing the psychology of the people who enjoyed it.

"[Wyeth's paintings] are just sort of colored drawings," said the modernist critic Hilton Kramer in the *New York Times*. "[They are] illustrated dreams that enable people who don't like art to fantasize about not living in the 20th century." The curator of modern art at the Art Institute of Chicago compared Wyeth's stuff to "kindly sermons at the village church. This artist's contrived compositions shine with moral rectitude. He offers us first-rate illustrations of 'the good life,' but these illustrations never rise above illustrations." "Illustration" is another synonym for "bad"—at least among modernist critics. You'd be hardpressed to find a great painting done before the 20th century that doesn't illustrate some story or other.

Wyeth didn't help his case when he happily admitted to voting for Nixon and Reagan. At times, his transgressions seemed to be more against etiquette than art. The anathema grew so intense that, when a prominent curator of 20th-century art volunteered to supervise a retrospective in New York in 1976, he did so, he said, "my reputation to the contrary notwithstanding." Several weeks later, the curator suddenly quit, without public explanation but apparently under the pressure of peers: "The man was terrified of his reputation," wrote one coworker. When Wyeth heard the news, he understood perfectly. "The poor son of a bitch," he said.

Nearly 40 years later, the curators of "Looking Out, Looking In" show no sign of professional squeamishness. Times have changed, as you've probably noticed. For anyone under the age of 30 the high-stakes standoff between figurative art and abstract art must seem as remote as the Wars of the Roses. Postmodernism got beyond the standoff by absorbing both points of view and making art of whatever kind unserious and beside the point. Nowadays, the figurative artist John Currin can turn his great technical skill to producing satiric pornography and his work will sit comfortably alongside an absurdist who produces blank canvases. One is as good, or bad, as the other; neither matters much.

In reviving Wyeth, Anderson and Brock seem to want to take him at his word, treating him as a figurative artist with a bent toward abstraction, or an abstractionist forever consigned to depict real scenes from the real world. The show is small but includes some of Wyeth's most famous paintings: *Groundhog Day* (1959), *Evening at Kuerners* (1970), its centerpiece, *Wind from the Sea* (1947), as well as the early sketches from which the paintings grew. The curators' principle of selection has been to exclude any finished painting that contains "narrative"—yet another term from the critics' notebook, and a close relative of illustration. Here, "narrative" means human subject matter. There are no people here, scarcely even a moo-cow. Only in the preliminary sketches do people appear, and then, presumably in an effort to reduce the image to its abstract essence, we see Wyeth scrub them out so that all that remains are window sills, curtains, farm tools, distant hills of mown hay, and the spectral light pouring in from who knows what source. Wyeth, in one of his frequent torments of doubt, would sympathize with the mission the curators have set for themselves. "My problem is my subject matter," he once said. "There's too damn much of it."

Anyone familiar only with Wyeth as his severest critics rendered him—i.e., as a Thomas Kinkade-like lineworker pumping out commercial art fit only (as one critic said) for the homes of retired Republican politicians and the boardrooms of bankrupt banks—will do well to take his time wandering this show. It quickly becomes clear how thoroughly the popular debates of decades past got Wyeth wrong. If these pictures are comforting nostalgia for a simpler past, "illustrations of the good life," and "kindly sermons," then I am Marie of Romania. Beneath the frequent prettiness, most of the pictures are just this side of harrowing, not just lonesome and melancholy but portraits of life as it seeps inevitably away. The wind that lifts the lace curtain in *Wind from the Sea* makes the hair on your arms stand up. Jamie Wyeth, Andrew's son and a celebrated artist himself, confesses to being puzzled by the benign view of Wyeth's work. "My father's work is terrifying," he said. It's not sentimental. It's luminous! But in a creepy way.

There was a lot more to him, in other words, than many of his friends and enemies picked up on—a constant hint, at least, of menace that keeps all of us at a distance from him and his work. If *Time* and *Newsweek* and Hilton Kramer had seen him plain, who knows what his reputation would have been?

It's not as if he didn't warn us. He once told his biographer Meryman a story about wandering the hills around Chadds Ford. It was a soft spring morning. Stopping to rest near a group of European spring beauties, he saw on a trail above him a young woman on a walk. Assuming she was alone, she moved off the trail, lifted her skirt, and defecated in the grass. Wyeth was charmed. "The white curve of her bottom was amazing," he told Meryman. The little lumps she left tumbled downhill and stopped in the patch of spring beauties.

He titled the painting of the flowers *May Day*. It shows the beauties flashing white and green, with hints of yellow and red, rising out of what appears to be a rich, brown bed of Brandywine loam. It has been a great favorite of Wyeth fans over the years; you can buy a reproduction on eBay for $495. It's uncharacteristically colorful, almost pretty and very springlike, and just abstract enough to be thoroughly misunderstood. ♦

B&A

# God and the Nazis

*An American chaplain pursues a connection.*

**BY ANDREW NAGORSKI**

**Mission at Nuremberg**
*The American Army Chaplain and the Trial of the Nazis*
by Tim Townsend
Morrow, 400 pp., $28.99

At the first of the Nuremberg trials, Justice Robert H. Jackson, the chief American prosecutor, delivered one of the most powerful opening statements in modern times. Speaking of the 22 top Nazi leaders brought before the International Military Tribunal (and Martin Bormann, who was tried *in absentia*), Jackson declared: "They have so identified themselves with the philosophies they conceived and with the forces they directed that any tenderness to them is a victory and an encouragement to all the evils which are attached to their names."

And yet, in *Mission at Nuremberg*, Tim Townsend, a former religion reporter at the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, chronicles the little-known tale of near-tender ministering by the U.S. Army chaplain assigned to most of the Nazis in the dock. Henry Gerecke, a 50-year-old Lutheran minister from St. Louis, certainly had no intention of encouraging evil. Townsend's uneven but intriguing account nonetheless makes clear that his actions raise profoundly difficult questions about applying Christian notions of forgiveness and redemption to those who perpetuated almost inconceivably monstrous crimes—and who, whatever their purported Christian upbringing, had treated Adolf Hitler as their only deity.

Gerecke had no illusions about the Nazis' transgressions against man and

*Andrew Nagorski, the author of* Hitlerland: American Eyewitnesses to the Nazi Rise to Power, *is working on a book about Nazi hunters.*

God. Before taking up his assignment in Nuremberg, he visited Dachau only 10 weeks after its liberation—and he would return there several times. He saw the execution mounds and, under a white cross, a sign in English that read: "This area is being retained as a shrine to the 238,000 individuals who were cremated here. Please do not destroy." Standing next to the ovens, Gerecke asked softly, "How could they do something like this?" Later, he would speak, probably metaphorically, about how his hands were smeared with blood when he touched the walls of buildings in the camp.

As the descendant of German immigrants, Gerecke remained committed to his forefathers' faith and worked hard to master the German language. Starting his career in ministry as the Depression hit, he also displayed a missionary zeal to help those most in need—both in material and spiritual terms. A gifted preacher, he was soon holding regular services in the city jail, attracting record attendance with both his sermons and well-orchestrated music. "Even killers will listen to a blood-bought Gospel," he wrote in a newsletter.

After the war, instead of returning home to a wife who had not seen him for more than two years as he served in Europe, Gerecke accepted the plea of Colonel Burton Andrus, the commandant of the Nuremberg prison, to stay for the war crimes trial along with two other chaplains. Although Andrus had expressed loathing for his charges, he was deadly earnest about the role he saw for Gerecke, whose prison experience in St. Louis particularly appealed to him: "Chaplain," he told Gerecke, "you're going to find lost sheep in our prison and if God is gracious to you, you might bring back a few of them."

While Gerecke was nervous about the task ahead, the challenge appealed to his core instincts. "If, as never before, he could hate the sin but love the sinner, he thought, now was the time," Townsend writes. The first prisoner he met was Rudolf Hess, Hitler's former deputy who had embarked on a bizarre solo flight to Scotland in 1940, claiming he wanted to negotiate peace. In a gesture that many of his fellow Americans found difficult to understand, Gerecke immediately shook Hess's hand. "I knew I would never win any of them to my way of thinking unless they liked me first," he wrote later.

Once the year-long trial started, and it became evident that many of the defendants would be hanged—in the end, 10 marched to the gallows—Gerecke worked relentlessly to win them over. Doing so meant leading the defendants to accept the faith in more than a perfunctory manner. While the first step was convincing them to attend the services he conducted in the prison chapel, the real goal was for them to achieve genuine repentance and embrace the Gospel, making them worthy of receiving Holy Communion.

ROBERT COHEN

*Capt. Henry Gerecke in England (1944)*

The most compelling parts of Townsend's account revolve around Gerecke's drive to achieve those results. He worked particularly hard to win over Hermann Göring, the dominant figure among the defendants. The former Luftwaffe commander welcomed Gerecke's overtures and was especially appreciative of his contacts with his wife, but he was openly cynical at first. He agreed to attend all chapel services, but his reasoning was simple: "Prayers, hell!" he said. "It's just a chance to get out of this damn cell for a half hour."

In the end, Göring developed a genuine respect for Gerecke's efforts—but he never convinced the chaplain that he had sincerely embraced the faith. In one of his hardest decisions, Gerecke refused him communion as his rendezvous with the hangman approached—an appointment Göring eluded by biting into a cyanide capsule shortly before he was supposed to be the first one hanged.

Others, like Fritz Sauckel, who had overseen the brutal treatment of millions of forced laborers, radio propaganda chief Hans Fritzsche, and Hitler Youth leader Baldur von Schirach, converted far more eagerly. When Gerecke came to Sauckel's cell to offer him communion, Sauckel cried: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" The chaplain later declared: "I believe he meant every word of it." Even Joachim von Ribbentrop, Hitler's foreign minister, who had been characteristically unrepentant and arrogant during much of the trial, accepted communion before becoming the first of the defendants to be hanged, escorted to the gallows by Gerecke. Others, like the Nazis' racial theoretician Alfred Rosenberg, remained contemptuous and defiant until the end.

All of which should have provided rich material for an engaging biography of an unquestionably fascinating "preacher man," coupled with well-integrated reflections on the nature of evil and the possibility of repentance. Unfortunately, Townsend doesn't quite pull this off. Too often his account strays off into lengthy, didactic digressions—several pages on the history of Holy Communion, for example, and

the story of Cain and Abel. The narrative suffers, and so does the reader, who is impatient to get back to the central character and issues.

Townsend did not have to provide a definitive answer to the question of whether Gerecke was a naïf or a modern-day saint, but he could have provided a more satisfying, focused, and taut tale. Perhaps one reason he fails to do so is that Gerecke was robbed on a visit to Frankfurt shortly after the trial ended, and so lost his detailed notes from Nuremberg. As a result, Townsend had to reconstruct many of Gerecke's experiences based on the minister's later speeches.

Still, Townsend brings to life a little-known character in the grand drama of Nuremberg, and he raises questions that have no easy answers. Could these mass murderers really deserve forgiveness from God and man? As a true believer, Gerecke had no doubt on that score. "This is our faith," he proclaimed. "A religion without forgiveness is only the ghost of religion which haunts the grave of dead faith and lost hope." ♦

B&A

# Director's Notes

*A giant of the theater as man of letters.*

BY MALCOLM FORBES

**The Selected Letters of Elia Kazan**
edited by Albert J. Devlin
with Marlene J. Devlin
Knopf, 672 pp., $40

In November 1953, while shooting *On the Waterfront*, Elia Kazan wrote a tetchy letter to producer Sam Spiegel in which he grouched about creative differences and hard practicalities such as budget and schedule. "Every once in a while you may get a letter from me," runs his pre-salvo lead-in. "Its [sic] a more exact way to communicate,—when I want to be exact."

Kazan, who was famous for his close collaborations with casts, crews, and scriptwriters, found he could be most "exact" in typed correspondence. In many ways, his letter to Spiegel is representative of the hundreds Kazan wrote. Gripes are pertinent and cogent. Praise is given, even lavished, when deserved. Directorial decisions are well-argued. Plot detail and character tics are rigorously explained and scrutinized from various angles. Passion for his craft is palpable—as is any bubbling-up of anger, which, consistently, is tempered towards the sign-off with apology, justification, or pledges of continuing love (in one letter: "Yours with continued love, a little less, temporarily, but still"). Apostrophe usage is arbitrary.

Of course, Kazan's letters were not all work. Play is recorded in personal and family letters. Both types are on show here. Of the 1,200 letters Kazan wrote, around 300 have been selected and edited by Albert J. Devlin and Marlene J. Devlin. Notable addressees include Tennessee Williams ("Tenn"), Arthur Miller ("Artie"), Marlon Brando, and Robert De Niro. Each letter comes tagged with a concise editorial commentary that elucidates and puts in context what we have just read. Ranging chronologically over 600 pages, and charting Kazan's rise as one of the most influential directors of American stage and screen, the letters begin with one from 1925 in which Kazan, at 15, whines to a former teacher about his father. They culminate with him at 78, declaring to his daughter that he was "fed up, worn out, sated" from working on his autobiography: "I've had it, as they say."

The first sections depict Kazan still-to-get-it. Early letters reveal his acting apprentice-work with the Group Theatre and his burgeoning disgruntlement at its organization. Change is necessary within and without. "The theatre in New York is not dead," he tells Clifford Odets in 1937, insisting as ever on the British spelling. "The theatre in New York is dying and at the same time being reborn." Several months later, he is bewailing the fact that "There is no playwright in the country who is really in touch with reality." When he starts directing, he pens letters to whole casts, criticizing one hapless bunch for their "dutiful" performance and urging them to see method acting as the only way forward.

Once Broadway ("a scurvy thing") beckons, Kazan is plagued with self-doubt about his achievements and longs for "the main chance, the possibility for something real and enduring." That comes in 1947, with Williams's request that Kazan direct *A Streetcar Named Desire*; two years later, after taking on and triumphing with *Death of a Salesman*, Kazan's reputation is cemented.

With the 1950s comes the switch in medium, from plays to films, and Oscar-winning success for the film adaptations of *Streetcar* (1951), *Waterfront* (1954), and *East of Eden* (1955). It is in this decade that Kazan truly asserts himself in print, whether in fighting his corner to newspaper editors after lukewarm reviews or in zealously pitching new projects to moguls like Darryl Zanuck and John D. Rockefeller III. Some of his judgments are misfires ("Can't get over the feeling that Brando is WRONG"); others are prescient ("I'm for Paul Newman. This boy will definitely be a film star").

However, the fifties were also the time of Kazan's professional nadir. One letter from 1952, to the House Committee on Un-American Activities, shows him revising his previous testimony and outing Communists he worked with in his Group Theatre days. The incriminating affidavit is

*Malcolm Forbes is a writer and critic in Berlin.*

not included, but the letter is proof enough of Kazan's supposed perfidy. Follow-up letters in which he seeks to justify his actions ("what I did was necessary and right") nevertheless cost him key pen-pals in the film industry.

The later years touch on forays into novel-writing and inspire more ruminative letters on his accomplishments to family members. Throughout, family correspondence neatly counterbalances the letters concerning working life, and together they allow us to see two markedly different sides of the same man. It is in his letters to his first wife, Molly Day Thacher, that Kazan provides his most personal, heart-on-sleeve outpourings—not to mention lines of self-confessed shortcomings. One would appear to be a prioritizing of guilt: In a reply to Molly's "last letters of abuse and love," Kazan apologizes for name-calling but not for his affair with the starlet Constance Dowling. (The editors note that they have silently corrected Kazan's repeated misspelling of "marraige." With this in mind, it is tempting to believe his union was doomed from the start.)

While Kazan's letters shine a light on crucial milestones, from births and deaths to films and plays in various stages of production, they also illuminate those around him, particularly the unknowns whose careers he nurtured. James Dean, we hear, is "inventive and true," while Brando is "surly and introverted" but also "the best actor we have." Warren Beatty possesses "tremendous determination." Kazan is just as profuse with his wrath: Tight-fisted theater owner-producer Lee Shubert is a "fetid cadaver"; Hollywood a "dreary ass hole"; *A Man for All Seasons* "pure English pansy Theatre, cool, unreal, boring."

The person he has the most to say about is the one to whom he writes the most: Tennessee Williams, "the kindest of men." As Kazan writes more frequently, and with greater depth, we trace the transition from working relationship into solid friendship. Better still is being able to witness the journey from rough-draft "kitchen sink" scripts to finished, polished


*Tennessee Williams, Elia Kazan, Arthur Miller in New York (1967)*

ASSOCIATED PRESS

productions. Kazan's dramaturgical and psychological insight, revealed through page upon page of critique, helps "unify" Williams's *Camino Real* and *The Rose Tattoo*, whereas his coach-like support and marshaling spirit buoy Williams out of his many moments of despair.

After we have finished trawling these letters, who is the Elia Kazan that emerges? Certainly a less guarded incarnation than the self-portrait sketched in his 1988 memoir, *A Life*. Here we meet a flawed husband, a loving father, a loyal friend, and a consummate professional who admits to getting "awful intense . . . in fact, obsessed" with his work. Kazan was a perfectionist who believed in "spiritual propinquity" when casting, who approved of theatrical tradition but would "stiffen" at style, and who wouldn't suffer fools or compromise in attaining his vision—fighting studio bigwigs and censors both to keep the pivotal rape scene in *Streetcar* and to represent the brothel in *East of Eden* as "drab, evil and dull."

"Trust my instinct," he tells Jack Warner. "'I'm known as the Greek Barnum and I care like a son of a bitch."

But he also doubts. Self-deprecation alternates with gushing positivity. "My work has not been rewarding or rewarded or even good," he tells Odets in 1958. Kazan's letter to John Steinbeck two years later finds him worrying over his nickname, Gadget, and its implication of "ever-ready compliance, a subservient, scatter-shot friendliness and an adaptability which made it possible for me to be the 'necessary' thing to any man." Candid, cutting, affectionate, and often lyrical, these letters may not always endear us to their writer, but they add to our understanding and appreciation of a unique talent. ♦

B&A

# The Walking Cure

*In the footsteps of Hermann Hesse.*

BY JOHN STEINBREDER

*Hermann Hesse (1960)*

*Montagnola, Switzerland*

Friends of Hermann Hesse (1877-1962) called him "the endless walker," and there were few things he liked doing as much. Italy was a favorite place for his *camminatas*, and Hesse made seven trips to that land as a young man, exploring treasures of the Renaissance in the museums of Florence and ambling through the hills and towns of Tuscany and Umbria. In 1911, Hesse embarked on a three-month journey to India (where his mother and father had worked as missionaries), Ceylon, Indonesia, and Malaysia. This kindled a spiritual curiosity in Eastern religion that later influenced Hesse's work as well as his constant quest for enlightenment.

Then there were the treks he took in and around Montagnola, the scenic Swiss village above Lake Lugano that became his adopted home at the end of World War I—and where he lived until his death. In fact, Montagnola is where Hesse most frequently and happily strolled, up and down narrow lanes canopied by cypresses and sycamores, through forests and past vineyards, often in sight of the southernmost peaks of the Alps and the distant lake shore over which they loomed.

Wearing a straw hat and carrying his easel and paints, as well as a folding stool, he stopped at different spots along these walks so he could record what he was seeing and, in his words, "preserve with watercolors something of the abundant magic." It was another part of his existence—one outside of his writing—and it was a place where Hesse could balance the intellectual life of his deskwork with life outdoors. He often wrote about the synthesis of those two worlds, most powerfully in *The Glass Bead Game* (1943). And Montagnola was where he so diligently tried to find—and forge—that balance.

It was the knowledge of Hesse's saunters through the Ticino, the Italian-speaking canton at the very bottom of Switzerland, that prompted me to go there for a walk of my own. That, and the fact that I had lived for a spell two villages away from the Casa Camuzzi, where Hesse first resided in Montagnola—and where he wrote *Siddhartha* (1922), *Narcissus and Goldmund* (1930), and *The Glass Bead Game*, among other works. It was an easy trip, and an enlightening one too, as it gave me a sense of what moved and motivated the man as I traced his steps, occasionally sitting on benches from which he would have taken in panoramas of lakes improbably lined with palm trees and backed by snow-covered crags, sipping *caffé correttos* beneath the pergola on the terrace of his favorite *grotto* as songbirds warbled, and savoring the sweet scents of lavender and magnolia that wafted through his air years ago—and now mine.

In 1919, Hesse, already a celebrated author, moved to Montagnola. He was a broken man, 42 years old, looking to leave the harsher, more buttoned-down north of Switzerland after suffering a nervous breakdown for a place in the softer, gentler south, where he could heal and rejuvenate. He knew the Ticino from his earlier travels to Italy and liked its quiet quaintness as well as its natural beauty. Shortly after he arrived, he rented a four-room apartment in Montagnola, in the Casa Camuzzi, on what was called the Collina d'Oro, or the Golden Hill.

When it came time for my walk, I started where Hesse himself would have started. Casa Camuzzi, built in the style of a Russian country house in 1853, is a stone abode with cast-iron railings and wood shutters painted robin's-egg blue. The front entrance is on a narrow, cobblestoned street, and there is a terraced garden in back that overlooks San Salvatore, the wedge-like mountain seemingly rising right out of Lake Lugano, and the cerulean waters beyond. It's Sunday morning, and church bells are pealing gently as I admire the stately façade of the building, which is today a private residence and not open to the public. But I am able

NEWSCOM

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to go into the Torre Camuzzi next door, which boasts a medieval tower and now houses the Hermann Hesse Museum.

There are copies of the author's books and his old typewriter, as well as photographs. Several of his watercolors hang on the walls; they are a reminder of the liberating diversion he found in painting after his breakdown. Intricately woven carpets hang from the walls of the main room, and pieces of his wardrobe, including *dhotis* that speak to the Eastern influences in his life, are displayed behind glass. There are letters, too, and Hesse is said to have answered every missive ever sent to him, whether from well-known friends like Konrad Adenauer and Sigmund Freud or middle-school students who liked his work. And lots were sent, with Hesse writing an estimated 35,000 responses over the years. In fact, the volume of mail became so great that the post office in Montagnola had to acquire a pushcart in order to transport all of his correspondence.

My *camminata* continues down Via Ra Curta and a narrow leafy lane lined with oleander shrubs with pink and white flowers and rose bushes in full bloom. Soon I come upon the village of Certenago, with tidy stone houses on whose walls frescoes dating back hundreds of years have been painted. Most of the homes have flower boxes bursting with red and pink geraniums and small balconies with cast-iron railings.

Then I arrive at the Chiesa Sant'-Abbondio, a modest stone church dating to the 11th century and perched on a small promontory at the end of a drive lined with cypress trees, each perfectly cylindrical and rising roughly 20 feet high. Terraces of merlot grape vines grow in the fields to my left, and halfway down that road, I begin to hear the congregation sing a solemn hymn. I listen to the voices as I walk along a series of stone shrines arranged around the churchyard, each with a weathered fresco depicting one of the Stations of the Cross.

Hesse is buried in the cemetery across the road, with his third wife, the art historian Ninon Dolbin. Theirs is a simple grave site, with rose bushes, juniper, and holly growing around the stones on which their names are engraved, just like so many other markers here bearing the appellations of local families who have lived and died in this area and whose names are still on the windows and awnings of nearby *osterias* and grocery stores. It makes me think of how much Hesse wanted to be a part of Montagnola—and to be much more than a *zucchino*, which is what the Ticinese called people who came "from the other side of the Alps." In time, the villagers made Hesse an "honorary citizen" of Montagnola. But that honor did not come until July 1962, a little more than a month before Hesse died and some 43 years after he had moved here.

After contemplating the headstones in the cemetery, I follow the path into the Canvetto Forest, along the side of a ridge facing northeast, so well shaded by the late morning sun that it feels 10 degrees cooler, and so quiet that I can hear acorns drop to the ground—and squirrels scurrying across the leafy forest floor to grab them. Then I come upon the Grotto Cavicc, where Hesse often stopped for sustenance. I decide to do the same, ordering an espresso and a shot of local grappa, a bracing combination that elevates the spirit as well as the heart rate.

The next stop is known simply as the "Glade," and it is a place where Hesse used to sit with his paints, "trying to catch and put on paper a small corner of the wood." I settle onto a bench here, for a brief rest, and then begin a steep climb up the narrow Vicolo di Liguna to the charming Hotel Bella Vista, and then back to the last stop on the walking tour, the Casa Rossa, into which Hesse moved in 1931. His friend and patron from Zurich, Hans Bodmer, had bought this land for Hesse and initiated the construction of a Ticinese-style house, with stone walls, large, shuttered windows, and a red-tiled roof.

*Casa Camuzzi*

At this point in his life, Hermann Hesse immersed himself in gardening—growing vegetables and flowers, and nurturing merlot grapes in a small vineyard. He often said that his time here helped his writing, and he later averred that the complex content of *The Glass Bead Game* was conceived at Casa Rossa. That book was Hesse's last novel, but it was by no means the last of him as a writer, and he continued to produce short stories, essays, and poems from Casa Rossa, as he also answered the daily letters. It seems a good place to have ended a great writing life. ♦

RILBA

B&A

# A Lesson for America

*What made us great can keep us great.*

BY DAVID AIKMAN

Declinist literature about America hasn't been so fashionable since, well, since the Russians beat us into space with Sputnik, or the Japanese seemed to be buying up every American golf course west of the Mississippi in the 1980s, or China commissioned its first aircraft carrier in 2012. Gloom about the condition of America and its relative ranking in the world certainly seems to be widespread, reinforced by polls reporting that more than 60 percent of Americans believe the country is headed in the wrong direction. In the past few years, there has been a roster of declinist books published, from Patrick J. Buchanan's *Suicide of a Superpower: Will America Survive to 2025?* to Thomas L. Friedman and Michael Mandelbaum's *That Used to Be Us: How America Fell Behind in the World It Invented and How We Can Come Back*.

At first glance, *Rebound* might seem to be a recitation of the nation's woes, followed by a political/social formula for their rapid redress. It is not, however, just a dreary laundry list of all that is wrong with the country today. What is refreshing about *Rebound* is that it compiles an impressive list of the policies and institutions that allowed the American political, social, and economic experience to prosper from the start. "The very things that once made America great," Kim Holmes writes, "are not its land, weather, or some other form of nature but its people, its spirit, and its form of government."

The American ethos, according to Holmes, was based on the assumption that natural law was universally binding for all human beings. America's great innovation, he writes, was pairing liberty and equality, and the liberty component of the ethos grew out of the conviction that liberty was not something granted to the people by governments, but something to be safeguarded by the people. The equality component ensured that "America's fierce dedication to social mobility helped kill the European idea of a permanent class." The emergence of an elite white Anglo-Saxon Protestant faction went against the healthy class fluidity of American society. Though often gifted and patriotic, WASPs based their emerging elitism not on shared American values but on European-style aristocratic social prejudices.

**Rebound**
*Getting America Back to Great*
by Kim R. Holmes
Rowman & Littlefield, 264 pp., $27

The golden age of American success and prosperity, according to Holmes, culminated in the 1950s, with the global dominance of the American economy and the prevalence of the idea that the American Dream was a good thing for all societies. This era also helped create the modern version of "American exceptionalism." Holmes cites the bold confidence of General Motors chairman Harlow Herbert Curtice, whose 1954 decision to invest billions of GM's own money in new car production in the midst of recession led to a renewed surge of growth across the economy. "America Inc.," declares Holmes, "was about more than business. Its genius was that it shared a common culture with the country as a whole. The values of people and business were like a seamless web."

Holmes readily acknowledges the nation's failures in its historic treatment of minorities, but he takes issue with those who argue that the defining "narrative" of American life is "the blood of human bondage" as opposed to the "city on a hill" principle, whereby people of all faiths can "practice their religion freely" and the struggle to reverse injustice for African Americans was inspired by (and made possible by) an ideal of freedom and the rule of law: "It is impossible to reconcile these two different images of the American narrative. . . . They cannot both be true. But they can both be partly true."

The core of what went wrong, in Holmes's view, was the emergence of the counterculture of the 1960s, the bitter controversies about American global power triggered by the Vietnam war, and the abandonment (by liberals) of the liberal anti-communism of Harry Truman. In one of the more interesting analyses here, Holmes follows the genealogy of countercultural ideas from Ernest Hemingway in the 1920s to Norman Mailer in the 1960s and '70s to the emergence of what he calls the "liberal internationalism" of antiwar liberals like John Kerry and the social collapse of poor communities through the influence of the self-indulgent "me-first" values of sixties rebels. Those rebels, according to Holmes, no longer storm the American ramparts; they now man them. And in foreign policy, the Obama administration embraces a "liberal internationalism" as its motivation, its policies justified precisely because they are *not* intended to defend America's interests.

Employing the basketball metaphor of getting a "rebound" as a result of another's mistake, Holmes posits that the recovery of American strength depends on a rediscovery of America's values, traditions, and the freedom that made it strong in the first place.

"Americans are not ready to throw in the towel," says Holmes. "Decline is a choice, not a destiny, and we can avoid the sad fate of so many other great nations if only we choose to be faithful to our history, our identity, and our principles." ♦

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B&A

# The Original Mad Man

## *Al Feldstein, 1925-2014.*

BY PHILIP TERZIAN

The first magazine to which I subscribed was neither *Boys' Life* nor *Sports Illustrated*; it was *Mad*, whose longtime editor (1956-85) Albert Feldstein died last month at the age of 88. I was gratified to see that his death, at any rate, was duly noted with lavish tributes and extended obituaries. He surely deserved them: *Mad*, in my estimation, has never quite gotten the credit it deserved as a molder (twister?) of baby boom minds and precursor to such satirical institutions as the *Onion*, *Saturday Night Live*, or *National Lampoon*.


Yet the nature of its satire—indeed, Al Feldstein's contribution—has been misunderstood as well. The descriptions of *Mad* in the press—"blithe mockery, disengaged disdain and nose-thumbing scorn of pop culture" (*Washington Post*)—seem to me to have missed the point. Indeed, you would think that, prior to *Mad*, American humor was politely respectful of our national culture, or that the sacred cows of American life—church, state, business, motherhood, armed forces—remained sacred until some time in the Eisenhower administration.

That would surprise readers of, say, the *New Yorker* during Harold Ross's tenure as editor (1925-51), or admirers of W.C. Fields or Robert Benchley, or their grandparents, who read Ambrose Bierce and attended the lectures of Artemus Ward or Petroleum V. Nasby.

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In fact, American humor has always been mocking and disdainful: Cartoons of Abraham Lincoln were no less cruel than depictions of Ronald Reagan, and there is no contemporary fiction more subversive of American piety than Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson* or the Sut Lovingood stories of George Washington Harris.

What distinguished *Mad* was not its place in the great tradition but its mastery of parody, and for that Al Feldstein deserves full credit. Prior to Feldstein, *Mad* was a slightly out-of-the-ordinary comic book of its era, very redolent of its pulp origins in *Tales from the Crypt* and *Weird Science*. His contribution—self-evident in retrospect, but not so obvious at the time—was to marry the graphic format with the observational/political humor of comedians of the era, such as Mort Sahl, Shelley Berman, and Stan Freberg. *Mad*, in that sense, was an illustrated version of a Freberg routine: Lawrence Welk's band floating out to sea on a cloud of bubbles.

At any rate, at age 10, that's what appealed to me—and for the next few years, until the *Mad* formula began to pall. The features that obituary-writers have tended to celebrate—Don Martin's grotesque drawings, Dave Berg's "Lighter Side of . . ." series—seemed at the time to be the least satisfactory things about *Mad*, gentle musings on everyday life with about as much bite as an Art Buchwald column. Even the "Spy vs. Spy" cartoon, with its supposed Cold War theme, left me cold. By contrast, the first *Mad* article I remember—a Madison Avenue approach to marketing the 1960 presidential candidates—contained the hallmarks of comic inventiveness: It was novel, counterintuitive, sardonic, and, of course, prescient. I can still see Lyndon Johnson depicted as a pack of cigarettes—"Have a real candidate. Have a Johnson"—which, a half-century later, is strikingly close to reality.

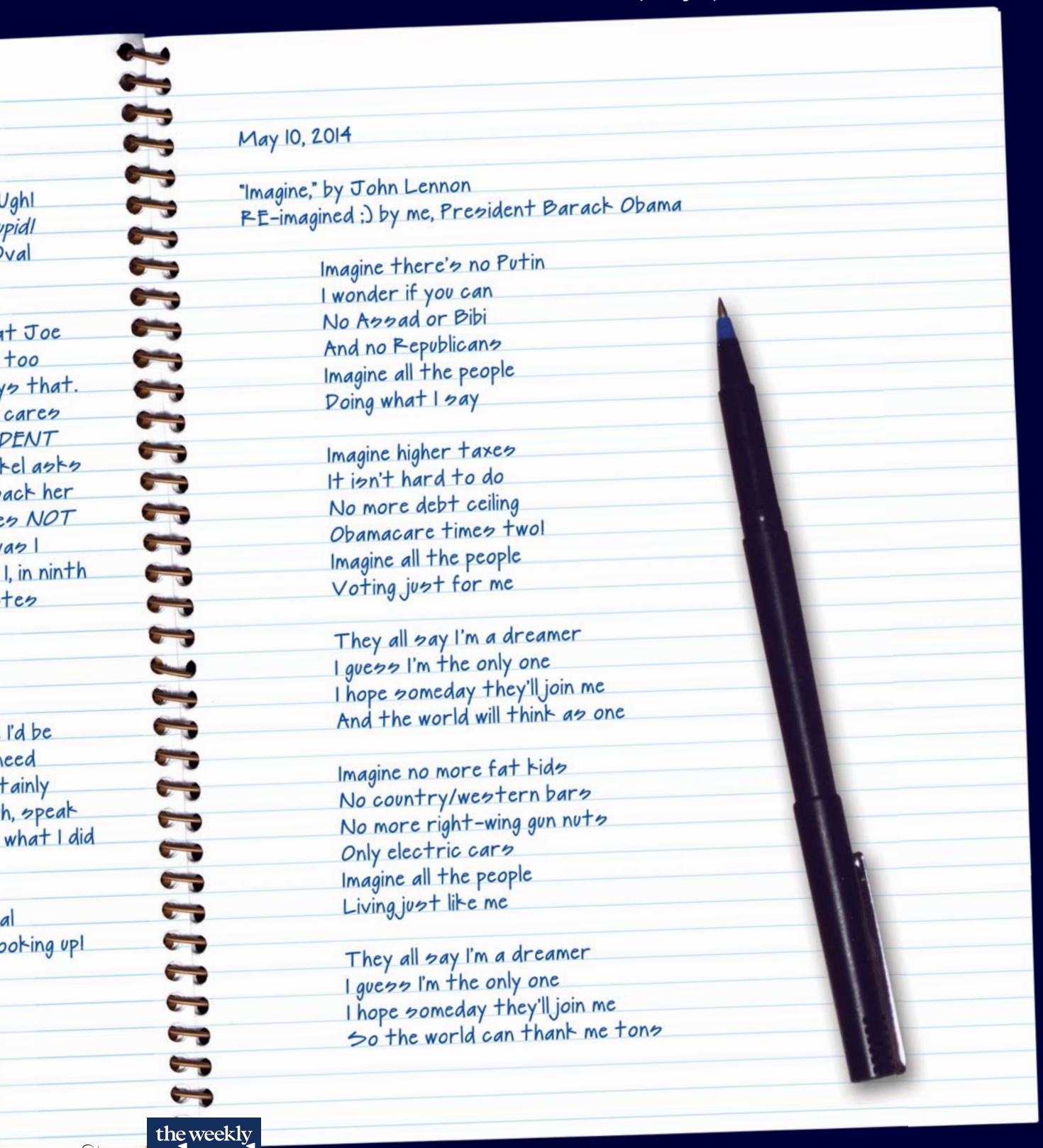
The irony is that the blandly liberal politics of *Mad*—poking fun at bourgeois conventions, lampooning sanctimony, giggling at generals and Big Business and network television—have been inverted in the fullness of time. One example will suffice: "Protest Letters" depicts a ventriloquist and his dummy exchanging painfully anodyne jokes on television—"This report card is a disgrace, Marmaduke! I don't think you're trying very hard at school." "But I am, Mr. Murphy! My teacher says I'm her *most trying* pupil!"—whereupon the network is deluged with angry letters from Shocked Parent, Indignant Teacher, a man named Marmaduke, and a range of trade associations and protective societies. When the same routine is repeated, the network plays it safe the second time with pictures, but no sound.

Ultimately, *Mad* found its voice in its parodies of movies and television, drawn by Mort Drucker and Wallace Wood, among others, and written by any number of "the usual gang of idiots" who graced its masthead. In "East Side Story," the Cold War is depicted as a gang rumble in the U.N. neighborhood between West and East (*When you're a Red, you're a Red all the way / From your first Party purge to your last power play*). And in "My Fair Ad-Man," the Pygmalion story is transferred to a Manhattan advertising agency where one partner (Cary Grant) persuades a skeptical officemate (Charles Laughton) that he can transform a beatnik (Frank Sinatra, complete with goatee and beret) into an account executive—a precursor, as it were, of *Mad* Men.

The genius of successful parody is the marriage of fiction and truth, a keen eye to see the subject in caricature and a sharp ear to reproduce the music slightly off-key. In its heyday, *Mad* had it; and thanks to Al Feldstein, it still makes me laugh. ♦

MORT DRUCKER

***"And that's what's frustrating to me sometimes about Obama is that the world seems to disappoint him. Republicans disappoint him, Bashar al-Assad disappoints him, Putin as well."***
***—David Remnick, May 6, 2014***



May 10, 2014

"Imagine," by John Lennon
RE-imagined :) by me, President Barack Obama

Imagine there's no Putin
I wonder if you can
No Assad or Bibi
And no Republicans
Imagine all the people
Doing what I say

Imagine higher taxes
It isn't hard to do
No more debt ceiling
Obamacare times two!
Imagine all the people
Voting just for me

They all say I'm a dreamer
I guess I'm the only one
I hope someday they'll join me
And the world will think as one

Imagine no more fat kids
No country/western bars
No more right-wing gun nuts
Only electric cars
Imagine all the people
Living just like me

They all say I'm a dreamer
I guess I'm the only one
I hope someday they'll join me
So the world can thank me tons