

**WHO WON THE  
CULTURE WARS?**  
CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

the weekly

# Standard

SEPTEMBER 14, 2015

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## THE NEXT JUSTICES



**Filling Supreme Court vacancies:  
a guide for GOP candidates**

**BY RANDY E. BARNETT & JOSH BLACKMAN**

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# Long May She Reign O'er Them

Americans always profess to be shocked that our fellow Americans—well, many of them, anyway—seem to take an inordinate interest in the comings and goings of the British royal family. When, for example, Prince Harry or the Duchess of Cambridge, or any one of their better-known relatives sets foot on this continent, they tend to get the media treatment and public attention usually reserved for Hollywood celebrities or rock 'n' rollers or big-time athletes—maybe more.

Didn't we fight a revolution 200-odd years ago in order not to have a monarch?

Well, yes and no. As *THE SCRAPBOOK* is always at pains to point out, the colonies revolted not because they didn't like the idea of King George III but because the British Parliament of the day refused to grant to American colonists the political status they thought they deserved as British subjects (“no taxation without representation”). As we have learned since 1776, constitutional monarchies (Belgium, Great Britain, Denmark) are not necessarily inconsistent with democracy, and republics (China, Soviet Union, Cuba) don't necessarily feature political liberty.

So our affinity for the British royal family probably has as much to do with mutual history, language, customs, and longtime strategic alliance as a love for glamour, pageantry, or public theater.

Which brings us to the interesting fact that, this week, the current

sovereign, Elizabeth II, becomes the longest-serving monarch in British history. Her great-great-grandmother Victoria became queen in June 1837 and died in January 1901—a span of 63 years and seven months; the onetime Princess Elizabeth became queen when her father, George VI, died in February 1952—and on Sep-



tember 9 will surpass Victoria's tenure on the throne.

In one sense, as antimonarchists tend to suggest, the near-reverence in which Elizabeth is currently held has as much to do with endurance and ubiquity as anything else: A majority of Americans, and Britons, have never known any other British monarch. The queen, like Hadrian's Wall or Big Ben, has always been there and is as much a familiar symbol of Great Britain as anything else, animate or inanimate. And befitting a constitutional monarch, we know as much about the interior life of Elizabeth II—what she thinks about what she does, for example, or the world at large, or the people she meets—as about the interior life of Big Ben. Into her seventh decade and counting as

sovereign, from Winston Churchill to David Cameron, the queen has preserved the essential mystery of her singular role in the life of Great Britain while retaining the royal prerogatives once defined by Walter Bagehot: the right to be consulted, the right to encourage, and the right to warn.

Indeed, for Americans, there may be something to learn here. Britain's democracy—albeit one with a royal family, hereditary peerage, and established church—has been sustained, to no small degree, over the centuries by the fact that the head of government (prime minister) and head of state (monarch) are two different people. PMs come and go, with the will of the people, but the individual who personifies the nation as head of state remains above politics.

Here, of course, we combine these two functions in one person. Democratic political systems tend to reflect the cultures that nourish them, and here in America, our system of divided government, featuring a strong executive, has served us well. But the near-royal status we tend to confer on politicians who live in the White House may be a two-edged sword. There seems to be an instinctive need for a head of state who embodies the nation. But when that head of state is a party politician, and not a dignified figurehead carrying out public duties, we run certain risks to the health of democracy.

Which is why, from across the big pond, *THE SCRAPBOOK* exclaims: *Vivat Regina!* ♦

## Red-Light Fiasco

Longtime readers may recall *THE SCRAPBOOK*'s fixation on red-light cameras, which represent a perfect case of nanny-statedom. They are a technological innovation designed to create government revenue under the rubric of “safety.” Yet they fail at every level: Across the country, they

have been foisted on the citizenry not by elected officials (at least not directly), but by bureaucrats. Studies have shown that the cameras do not produce any real gains in safety; some studies suggest they actually make intersections more accident-prone, with drivers more frequently slamming on the brakes and getting rear-ended.

And in many cases, the terms of the “public-private partnerships” between government entities and the two big, multinational companies that administer red-light camera systems are so lopsided that the governments take home very little revenue.

What makes red-light cameras unique in modern America, however, is that they're the lone advance of the

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nanny state that is being successfully resisted and turned back. Townships and cities across the country have spent the last 10 years trying to get out of the red-light camera business. Sometimes they've gone so far as to sue the red-light camera companies.

The latest such lawsuit involves the city of Chicago suing Redflex Traffic Systems, the Australian company that is the largest administrator of red-light cameras in the world.

Chicago created a partnership with Redflex to bring red-light cameras to the city in 2003. The people of Chicago hated the cameras, and the system has been plagued with problems: In 2014, an investigative report in the *Chicago Tribune* discovered that Redflex had issued 13,000 faulty citations to Chicagoans in a single 10-month period.

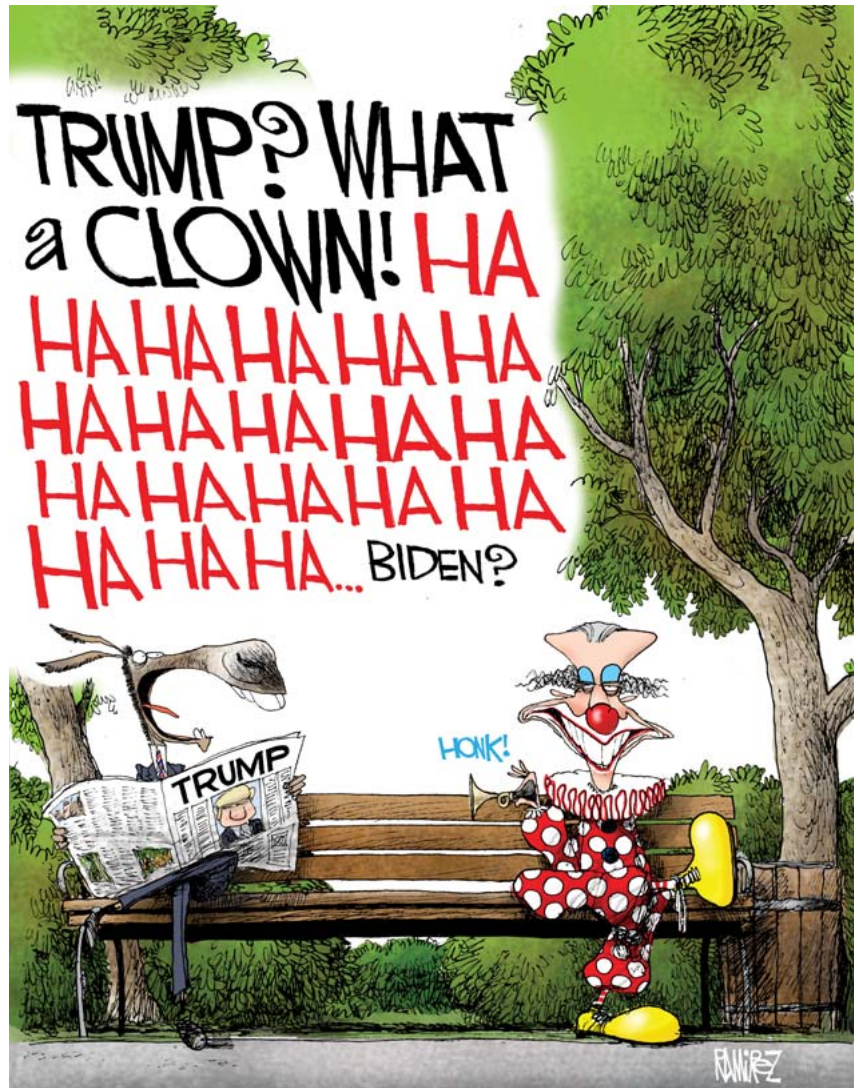
And then there were the ethical problems. In June, Karen Finley, the former CEO of Redflex, who resigned her post in 2013, pleaded guilty to a slew of bribery charges in federal court: It seems that one of the ways the red-light cameras had managed to worm their way into municipalities was by outright bribery and fraud.

Which is where Chicago's latest suit comes in. It alleges that Redflex got its contract by paying \$2 million in kickbacks to the city's Department of Transportation manager. The suit seeks \$300 million in damages from Redflex. If the city is lucky, Redflex will be forced to pay.

If the people of Chicago are lucky, the city will finally take down its cameras. ♦

## The Anti-Science Left

Fast-food chain Chipotle finds itself being sued for advertising that its food is "GMO-free." The lawsuit is still nascent but may attain class-action status and already threatens to be a PR nightmare for the burrito joint. For those following the debate over genetically modified foods—and we use the word "debate" generously, considering the level of crazy involved—what's happening to Chipotle was inevitable. The



people bringing the lawsuit do have a point about deceptive advertising. The restaurant declared it was "G-M-Over It," but Chipotle's menu was never totally free of genetically modified organisms. However, the people invested in labeling, and inevitably restricting, genetically modified food are anti-science and obsessed with attaining a level of dietary purity familiar only to those who lived on ashrams in the 1970s.

*Slate's* William Saletan wrote a good long essay about GMO foods in July that pulled no punches:

The people who push GMO labels and GMO-free shopping aren't informing you or protecting you. They're using you. They tell food manufacturers, grocery stores, and restaurants to

segregate GMOs, and ultimately not to sell them, because people like you won't buy them. They tell politicians and regulators to label and restrict GMOs because people like you don't trust the technology. They use your anxiety to justify GMO labels, and then they use GMO labels to justify your anxiety. Keeping you scared is the key to their political and business strategy.

Indeed, fostering such anxiety is downright harmful. The science of GMO crops being beneficial is not in dispute. It's estimated that genetically modified crops may have saved as many as a billion lives around the world by increasing yields and enhancing the nutritional value of produce. But of late, there's been a lot of grumbling from the left about how

GMO crops are part of a Western corporate plot to exert control over the developing world. If such sentiment takes root, it's not hyperbole to say it could increase starvation.

In the meantime, consumer brands such as Ben & Jerry's and Target have been happy to manipulate the anxious and make more money by convincing rich American consumers they're paying more for products that are allegedly healthier. There are reasonable objections to harmful chemicals being put into food, and thus for decades there has been no shortage of laws related to food safety. But those most interested in lobbying for anti-GMO laws seem to be getting little pushback for their focus on fearmongering over demonstrating harm.

Interestingly enough, a few liberal science writers such as Saletan are, to their credit, aghast that corporations are manipulating consumers with anti-GMO pandering. "When Jenny McCarthy argues that there's a link between vaccination and autism, or

a politician says he thinks anthropogenic global warming is a scam perpetrated by greedy climatologists, they are swiftly pilloried in most mainstream venues," wrote Jesse Singal at *New York* magazine. "And yet when the burrito giant Chipotle announced earlier this week that it will no longer be using any ingredients that contain or originate from genetically modified organisms, or GMOs, there was barely a peep from the usual guardians of empiricism."

Gee, we wonder why? Could it be that the media are loath to correct the biases of their own political and cultural class, no matter how unfounded they are? Lobbying for GMO-labeling laws isn't exactly the Tea Party cause du jour. However, we bet we could find a whole lot of vehement and unscientific hostility to genetically modified crops at any random Bernie Sanders rally. When science serves to largely discredit the opinions of the progressive street, it's not a mystery why you don't hear more about it. ♦

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## The Constant Gardener

Most summers I've had a fruit and vegetable garden, but rarely has my summer reading included much about gardening other than nursery catalogues and seed packets and basic how-to articles. This year has been different. *My Summer in a Garden* by Charles Dudley Warner, first published in 1870, has had my attention, and it's a book I've found hard to put down.

Warner lived in Hartford, Connecticut, in a veritable literary community. His immediate neighbors were Mark Twain and Harriet Beecher Stowe. As a writer, Warner didn't achieve the fame of Twain or the influence of Stowe (whose *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was the bestselling novel of the 19th century). Travel pieces he did for the *Atlantic* were popular. But *My Summer in a Garden* was the best thing he wrote. In 2002 the Modern Library reissued the book in its gardening series. It had been out of print for a century and a quarter.

The garden of the book's title was, of course, Warner's own, which took up a half-acre of his property. He had tended it over many summers—it was in his “sole care,” as he put it—while impressively maintaining his day job as associate editor and publisher of the *Hartford Courant*. In *My Summer in a Garden* the veteran gardener related what he knew, hoping that his readers would “find profit in the perusal of my experience.” The book was originally a series of columns published in the *Courant*.

A lawyer who left the practice of law only to sink into journalism, Warner was a churchman, though not a theologian, a Congregationalist, denominationally speaking. And he could assume his readers were at least nominally Christian and familiar with the creation stories of Genesis—of how man was made “from the

ground” and “put” into a garden “to work it and keep it.”

Thus, *My Summer* begins with the assertion that gardening starts with man's “love of dirt.” “Mud-pies gratify one of our first and best instincts,” wrote Warner, as though observing young children at play, enjoying their mess. This “fondness for the ground,” he said, never leaves the human species. For Warner, our love of dirt does not make every man or woman a gardener, but it explains why some people do garden.



Gardening, however, is not as easy as making mud pies. “Hardly is the garden planted,” wrote Warner, “when [the gardener] must begin to hoe it.” And weeds aren't the only threat. “Nature” also uses “bugs, worms, and vermin . . . to make war upon the things of our planting” and then “calls in the fowls of the air, just as we think the battle is won, to snatch away the booty.”

When the season ends in early fall, the garden has the look of a scene of “combat,” indeed “a battle-field.” “Ground vines are torn, trampled, and withered; and the ungathered cucumbers, worthless melons and golden squashes, lie about like spent bombs and exploded shells of a battle-field.”

For Warner, however, more impor-

tant than winning the “battle” of gardening was gardening well. (When did you last hear a version of that?) Indeed, the point of a private garden, he wrote, was not merely to give the gardener fruits and vegetables but to teach the gardener “patience and philosophy and the higher virtues,” such as calm in the face of “hope deferred, and expectations blighted.”

A garden thus is “a moral agent, a test of character, as it was in the beginning.” Warner counseled against quitting the “awful responsibility” of gardening. A gardener must not give in to the forces of nature but ever be vigilant, hoe at the ready: “I would not be without one for a single night.” Warner formulated what might be called the Gardener's Vow: “I mean to have a moral garden . . . one that shall teach . . . the great lessons of life,” one that produces “a large crop of moral reflections.” Such as: “You can tell when people are ripe by their willingness to let go.”

Warner may be too preachy for some. But could he write. The voice is authoritative—he knew a lot about gardening, including its more arcane aspects, such as the utility of the toad “as a fly and bug trap.” He had a talent for crafting epigrams, as when, in a discussion about digging potatoes, he wrote: “What small potatoes we all are, when compared to what we might be!” And Warner was funny, often using exaggeration to good effect. “Pusley,” the weed he constantly campaigned against, obviously cannot be what Warner said it was—“the greatest enemy of mankind.” Yet that absurd thought is what makes a reader laugh, still today.

So I'm pleased to have discovered Charles Dudley Warner and *My Summer*. Especially since, in concluding his book, Warner lamented the agricultural and horticultural experimentation of his time, vowing “to cultivate only the standard things.” I think he could have written for a certain magazine.

TERRY EASTLAND

# Hillary Antoinette

The American people believe the country is heading in the wrong direction. When pollsters ask whether the country is on the right or the wrong track, wrong track prevails by better than two to one. And the American people are right. *We are* going the wrong way: The economy isn't strong, the government doesn't work, social trends aren't great, and the world's going to hell in a handbasket.

So of course the luminaries of the political world decided that the nominees of the two major parties were going to be the two individuals in the whole country least suited to prevail in a wrong-track, time-for-a-change moment: Hillary Clinton and Jeb Bush. It's as if in 1788 the French ruling class were debating whether Marie Antoinette or the dauphin should succeed Louis XVI.

We're not about to have a French Revolution (one hopes), and it's possible one or both of the dynastic candidates will win their party's nomination. But surely one lesson of the summer of 2015 is that an awful lot of voters aren't in the mood to placidly accept such an outcome. Indeed, it's the prospect of Hillary Antoinette that's driving Democrats into the arms of their Robespierre, Bernie Sanders. It's the thought of Bush XVII that's energizing the supporters of Danton Trump.

Who else, other than Hillary and Jeb, is underperforming this year? Past and present governors. So Democrat Martin O'Malley and a host of Republican governors, all of whom thought their records in office would be valued by voters, haven't been doing well. Those who've never held elective office—Trump, Ben Carson, and Carly Fiorina—and the elected official who's been in office the shortest time, Ted Cruz, are moving up in the polls.

The American political class of 2015, like the French political class of 1788, is bewildered and befuddled. Democratic elites are annoyed that their voters don't seem sufficiently impressed by the need for a woman president, if all that means is a female set of hands steering the same train down the same wrong track. Republican elites are annoyed that their voters don't thrill to the notion of a steady set of hands on the wheel, so the ride to perdition is a smooth and steady one.

But of course "their voters" are not their voters anymore. And it's a wrong-track election not because the voters are deluded, crotchety, or temperamental. I repeat: It's a wrong-track election because we're on the wrong track.

The good news for Republicans is that Democrats have occupied the White House for the last eight years, and a wrong-track election naturally benefits the party out of power. The difficulty for Republicans is that the two best recent examples of an out-party benefiting from a wrong-track mood in a presidential race are when Democrats did so, in 1992 and 2008. And it's hard for Republicans to learn from rather than merely resent Democratic victories.

In 1992, many of the leading lights of the Democratic party—Mario Cuomo, Dick Gephardt, Al Gore—chose not to run. A little-known governor from Arkansas, despite being bedeviled by bimbo eruptions, staggered to the

nomination. As the Democratic convention began, Bill Clinton was in third place in general election polling, trailing an incumbent weakened by a surprise primary challenge from Pat Buchanan, and a man who had emerged from nowhere to run as an independent, Ross Perot. Then Clinton picked Gore as his running mate—recasting his party overnight to be younger, moderate, and somewhat hawkish. It was no longer the party of Mondale, Ferraro, Cuomo, and Dukakis. Clinton-Gore leapt some 20 points in the polls in two weeks. Perot ended up with 19 percent of the vote in November, and the Bush-Quayle ticket with 38 percent.

In 2008, the Republican primary was chaotic. John McCain, the eventual nominee, was fourth in the polls at this time in 2007. On the Democratic side, Barack Obama came from some 20 points down to defeat Hillary Clinton. Clinton had voted for the Iraq war, having internalized the lesson of 1992 that Democrats had to be relatively hawkish on foreign policy. But a wrong-track mood means that voters change their minds and will reward candidates for positions voters might have punished them for just a few years before.

That fact is, Republicans should win in 2016. Look at the swings against the incumbent party in those previous wrong-track elections. A GOP margin of 8 percentage points in 1988 turned to a deficit of 5 points in 1992—a 13-point swing. A 2004 GOP edge of 2 points turned to a deficit of



*The crisis of the ancien régime*

7 in 2008—a 9-point swing. Obama won 51 percent of the vote in 2012; even a smaller drop-off than those of 1992 and 2008 would put the Democratic nominee under water.

But it would be reckless to count on that. Bill Clinton in 1992 and Barack Obama in 2008 convinced voters that they understood the moment. They were able to convince voters that they would turn the train around and head down a different track, not merely carry out maintenance upgrades on the rail bed.

It may seem strange to put it this way, but this is the question: Can the Republican party produce its own version of a 1992 Bill Clinton or a 2008 Barack Obama? This shouldn't be that hard. But if it doesn't happen, and if the GOP loses in 2016, the guillotine will come out, and the Grand Old Party could go the way of the grand Old Regime.

—William Kristol

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# Obama's Victory Is Iran's Victory

Last week the White House puffed its feathers when Barbara Mikulski became the 34th Democratic senator to come out in favor of the nuclear deal with Iran. Mikulski's support ensures enough votes in Obama's pocket to sustain a presidential veto on a resolution of disapproval, but it's still not clear why the administration is celebrating. A majority of senators and congressmen oppose Obama's signature foreign policy initiative. So does most of the American public, by a two-to-one ratio according to a new poll released last week. In other words, the administration may have won this round, but the fight over the Iran deal isn't over.

The other critical actor is the White House's negotiating partner in Tehran. The clerical regime looks at the American political landscape and sees that it is operating in a protected environment that may change very quickly when a new administration comes to the White House in 16 months. Unlike the Obama White House, the Islamic Republic understands that the fight over its nuclear weapons program will continue.

Trust has been the cornerstone of the administration's Iran policy from the very beginning. Sure, White House officials say the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action isn't about trust—they quote Reagan and point to the (worthless) inspection regime and say it's about verification. But for Obama, the issue was never really whether Iran

could be trusted, but how to build Iran's trust in Obama.

From day one, Obama set out to show the regime that he could deliver. He started a correspondence with the supreme leader, Ali Khamenei. The American president apologized for imagined transgressions against Iran. He backed the regime against the Iranian people when they took to the streets in June 2009 to protest against their crooked leaders. Obama promised Tehran he wouldn't touch their Syrian ally Bashar al-Assad. The White House repeatedly leaked Israeli operations against Iranian arms shipments to its Lebanese ally Hezbollah. The administration ordered airstrikes against Assad's enemies and thereby helped the Syrian dictator survive, and sent American pilots to fly missions in support of IRGC troops in Iraq. The White House disregarded traditional U.S. allies like Saudi Arabia and Turkey and insulted the prime minister of Israel.

Still the Iranians must have wondered: Could Obama be trusted? In the negotiations, the White House played the role of Iran's lawyer, defending and supporting Tehran's demands when France and other EU partners demurred. In Washington, the White House attacked recalcitrant members of the president's own party, like Senators Robert Menendez and Charles Schumer, who opposed the Iran deal. They were beholden to donors and moneyed interests, said the administration. Anyone who was against the deal was putting America on a course to war, according to the president. Obama thus signaled to the Iranians that military force was not an option. He wasn't going to hurt them. Really, they should trust him—he had shown them how roughly he treated allies, foreign and domestic, who tried to get in the way of their new relationship.

The Iranians trust no one. It's a political culture where everyone has a dagger aimed at everyone else's back. All the Iranians see is that they're unlikely to ever have it so good again in Washington. Accordingly, the Iranian regime sees that it must move quickly to establish facts on the ground. Indeed, it seems Tehran is already moving assets into place. Recently, Ahmed al-Mughassil, the mastermind of the 1996 Khobar Tower bombing that killed 19 American servicemen and injured 372, was arrested in Beirut while traveling from Tehran on an Iranian passport. Presumably Mughassil was dispatched for a purpose—perhaps to assist Hezbollah on a project targeting either Israel or American allies in the Persian Gulf. Last month, Kuwaiti authorities captured an Iranian arms shipment destined for a local Hezbollah cell. Two Iranian diplomats operating out of the embassy in Kuwait City reportedly coordinated the shipment.

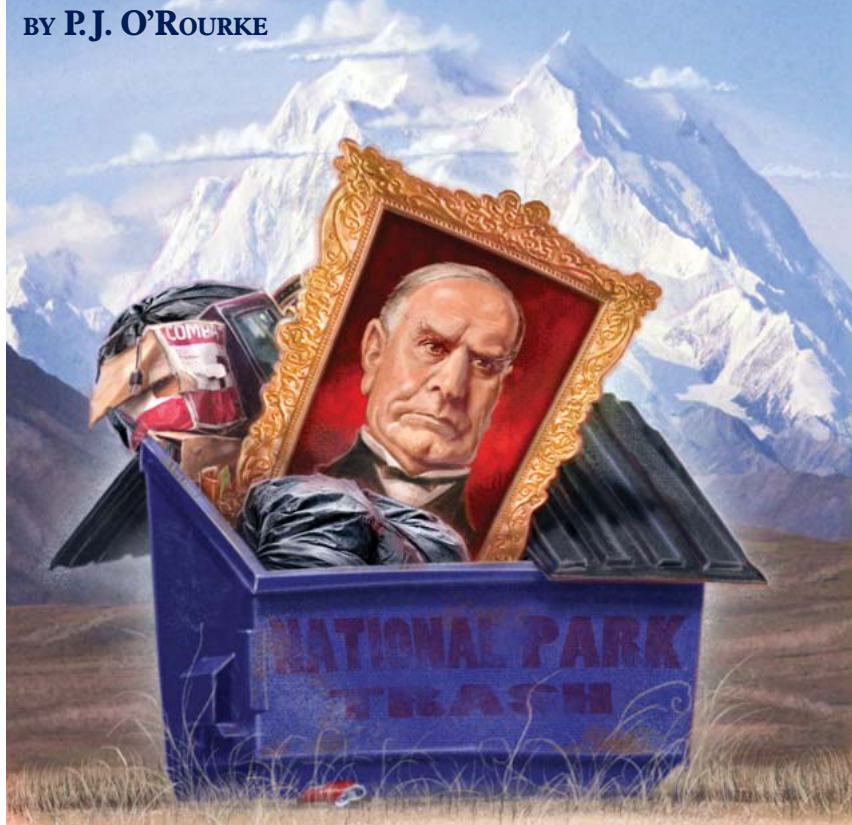
The Obama administration is celebrating the Iran deal as a political victory over its opponents—namely, the majority of the American people. But this “victory” comes at a high price. It has provided the Iranians with a window of opportunity. Contrary to the White House's rhetoric arguing that the only alternative to the deal is war, the deal, in strengthening Iran, has made conflict more likely.

—Lee Smith

# Bye Bye McKinley

A president who deserves to be remembered.

BY P.J. O'ROURKE



*Mahomet made the people believe that he would call a hill to him, and from the top of it offer up his prayers, for the observers of his law. The people assembled; Mahomet called the hill to come to him, again and again; and when the hill stood still, he was never a whit abashed, but said, If the hill will not come to Mahomet, Mahomet will go to the hill.*

—Francis Bacon, *Essays*, 1625

President Obama has, as it were, gone to the hill. He has renamed Mount McKinley. Its new name is Denali. This is, as the *New York Times* put it, “an Alaska native name with deep cultural significance to the tallest mountain in North America.”

*P.J. O'Rourke is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD.*

I doubt the name is of any significance to the mountain. But I am not one of that kind who believes an inanimate object has an animating spirit—a nymph, a dryad, a naiad, or a whatnot. And I wouldn't have taken the editors of the *New York Times* or President Obama for one of that kind either.

And if there is a mountain god in this 20,327-foot rock pile, I doubt he, she, or it is feeling deep cultural significance about being called Denali. It is the name of a very large SUV manufactured by General Motors and emitting copious amounts of greenhouse gases. My wife and I own two.

In the Athabaskan family of languages *denali* means “the high one.” According to the Alaska Native Language Center there are fewer than 1,000 Athabaskan speakers. In a nation of 319 million where 318,999,000 of us

don't speak Athabaskan, if President Obama wanted to change the name of Mount McKinley, he just should have been honest with us and called it “The High One.”

But why would President Obama want to change the name of Mount McKinley? It might be spite. In the 1880s and early 1890s the peak was called “Densmore's Mountain,” after a gold prospector who was the first dead, white, European male to reach the mountain's base. President Obama seems rather opposed to dead, white, European males, or, anyway, to the culture they engendered.

Then, during the presidential campaign of 1896, another Alaskan gold prospector changed the mountain's name to “McKinley,” the candidate he supported. McKinley won. McKinley was a Republican. You can see why President Obama would be upset.

Alaska has voted for the Republican candidate in every presidential election since statehood except for 1964, when Barry Goldwater was running against Lyndon Johnson. This may have been because Goldwater had the word “gold” in his name and was not from Alaska but was from Arizona instead. Alaskans are touchy on the subject and jealous of their national preeminence in all matters concerning that precious metal. But I wander from my topic.

President Obama's economic policies indicate that he is not in favor of “sound money.” We would have sound money if the United States were on the gold standard as it was in McKinley's day. We may thus infer that President Obama has no use for gold prospectors, much less a dead, white, European, male Republican one.

President Obama has other reasons to attempt to erase the memory of America's 25th president.

Like President Obama, McKinley came into office during a severe economic crisis. McKinley fixed it. America became broadly prosperous.

Like President Obama, McKinley was an isolationist dragged into a foreign war he opposed. McKinley won it. America became a world power.

Like President Obama, McKinley faced Chinese trade problems.

GARY LOCKE

McKinley solved them. America out-competed China with the “Open Door Policy.”

Unlike President Obama, McKinley didn’t transfer to an Ivy League university, get a college diploma, or go to grad school—things Obama was famously all too good at. And during the brief time McKinley attended an institution of higher learning he wasn’t a po-faced political science major indignantly calling for South Africa divestment. He was an SAE frat boy.

McKinley became a lawyer by the old-fashioned means of “reading for the law” in a real law office so that McKinley knew what he was talking about when he talked about the law. (*Vide* U.S. Supreme Court decision on whether the Affordable Care Act is legislation or a tax.)

In fact, McKinley was a human rights lawyer, except he was successful at it. In 1876 McKinley defended, pro bono, a group of coal miners who, clashing with strikebreakers, had been arrested for riot. McKinley got all but one of the coal miners acquitted.

McKinley’s defense of the coal miners was so brilliant that it impressed the owner of the mine. Cleveland plutocrat Mark Hanna would become McKinley’s most important political supporter and foremost campaign donor. Talk about “Bringing People Together.”

And McKinley was immensely popular. His assassination caused a shared national grief not seen again until the death of John F. Kennedy 62 years later.

And yet, in a way, none of the above makes sense. President Obama would have reason to hate President McKinley, if President Obama knew enough to know to hate him. I doubt, given when and where President Obama went to high school and college, that he ever learned any of these things about William McKinley.

The kind, reserved, and dignified man who was once famous for being elected president of the United States by campaigning from the front porch of his home in Canton, Ohio, is little remembered and less regarded today.

Therefore I’ve decided President Obama’s renaming of Mount McKinley is not an attack on William

McKinley. It’s a personal attack on me.

I went to McKinley Grade School in Toledo, Ohio—not so far in distance or distinction from Canton. My great grandfather, William Milton Checkley, was a friend of William McKinley. My grandmother met McKinley when she was a little girl and recalled him fondly for the rest of her life.

President McKinley said, “Our differences are policies; our agreements, principles.” He said, “The mission of the United States is one of benevolent assimilation.”

President McKinley was a man of restraint. He believed in the life of America. He believed there was more to life than politics. And he didn’t believe politics should obtrude itself into every aspect of life. He kept himself to himself and trusted his neighbors to mind their own business, the business of, as he put it, “securing the highest and best destiny of the race of man.”

As for Hope and Change, William

McKinley said, “That’s all a man can hope for during his lifetime—to set an example—and when he is dead, to be an inspiration for history.”

He’s history now. Or, with the renaming of Mount McKinley, not.

My great-grandfather is history, too. William Checkley owned a farm where he bred trotting horses for harness racing. His sulky driver was a man named Shorty. My grandmother was with her father when he was on his deathbed in 1916. He told her something that sums up my political philosophy, that sums up the political philosophy of all good Republicans like William McKinley, that sums up the concerns and priorities all Americans should have if our nation weren’t infested with meddling, busybody, poke-nose hoppers and changers. My great-grandfather’s dying words were, “How’d Shorty do at the track today?”

President Obama, go sit on Denali. ♦

## ‘Growing’ in Office

How Alaska’s governor went from  
Palin favorite to Obama pal. **BY FRED BARNES**

*Juneau, Alaska*  
**G**overnor Bill Walker flew to Washington, D.C., to accompany President Obama aboard Air Force One on the president’s seven-hour flight to Anchorage. “I’m honored to be governor of Alaska at the time a sitting president comes to Alaska,” he told the *Alaska Dispatch News*. “You bet.”

Walker made the most of his opportunity. By his estimate, he spent 90 minutes talking one-on-one with Obama. They agreed on many things. Walker had expanded Medicaid,

bolstering Obamacare. He wants to raise taxes and increase the state’s control of energy production and transmission—ideas the president was bound to find congenial. Walker also talked up Alaska issues. After his time with the president last week, Walker posted pictures of them together on his Facebook page.

Given Walker’s enthusiastic embrace of Obama, you may be surprised to know he isn’t a Democrat. Until a year ago, he was “a traditional Alaskan Republican.” He identified himself as a pro-life social conservative. Walker is an independent now, and if he weren’t he wouldn’t be governor.

Walker, 64, was elected in 2014 as

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part of a “unity ticket” created with two months to go in the campaign. His running mate for lieutenant governor was Democrat Byron Mallott. As his part of the “unity” deal, Walker canceled his lifelong registration as a Republican. He ran as an independent backed by the Democratic party and organized labor. There was no Democratic candidate. Walker won by 6,000 votes, ousting Republican governor Sean Parnell, who had won with 59 percent of the vote in 2010.

Walker’s victory was unusual for another reason: Sarah Palin endorsed him. She hosted an event for him at her home in Wasilla—after he’d jilted the Republican party, her party. Parnell had been her lieutenant governor, but they disagreed on oil taxes. Elected governor in 2006, she raised them. He cut them. How much her endorsement helped Walker is anybody’s guess.

The fate of Walker as an independent governor doesn’t require guesswork. He came to office with no political machine. “He’s a man without a country,” says Suzanne Downing, the Alaska GOP’s communications director. “There isn’t a constituency out there for him.”

Republicans control the legislature, but he’s disowned them. There’s no independent or Walker caucus. That leaves Democrats and unions, the Alaskan left. They’ve filled the vacuum. Walker is forced to govern, in effect, as a Democrat. He’s their guy.

For the moment, he appears comfortable in that role. On major issues, his positions match those of Democrats. As a candidate, he supported the Medicaid expansion. He criticized Parnell for reducing the tax bite on oil companies. He insists the state should own 51 percent of the proposed \$65 billion natural gas pipeline. Alaskans refer to the pipeline as the biggest construction project ever in the United States.

Alaska, however, has hit a bump

in the road. For decades, roughly 90 percent of the state’s tax revenues have come from the oil industry. When the price of oil was \$110 a barrel, the state was flush. But when it fell to less than \$50 a barrel last year, Alaska faced a fiscal crisis. The state has a \$3.5 billion deficit.

Walker vowed to cut the operating budget by 16 percent, but managed only 2.8 percent. He cut hundreds of



*Walker and Obama arrive in Anchorage, August 31.*

state jobs, many of which were unfilled. He asked for a one-year delay in the cost-of-living increase in salaries of state employees. But Democrats and public sector unions wouldn’t hear of it. Walker had to back down.

The assessment of his tenure by Republicans is withering. “Walker won the election, then empowered Democrats to run the transition process, firing nearly every Republican working in exempt positions, replacing them with liberal Democrats,” says Frank McQueary, the vice chair of the state GOP.

“In his first six months, he refused to work with the Republican-controlled legislature and has drifted far from his previous conservative positions,” McQueary says. “But he is enthralled with the title and the trappings of governor, happy to allow the Democrats to run the show.”

Another Republican says Walker “has started to turn Alaska into a new Venezuela.” When the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority acquired the Fairbanks Natural Gas Company, Republicans said Walker was behind it. Walker’s office denies this, noting that AIDEA is an independent agency.

Meanwhile, the Walker administration blocked a private firm from buying the Point MacKenzie liquid natural gas plant.

Walker, according to a well-connected Republican, “wants the state to own it. He is trying to own and control the means of production in Alaska.”

The big test is the pipeline—the Alaska LNG Project—from the energy-rich North Slope to a terminal far to the south. In his campaign, Walker advocated a 51 percent stake for the state. In private talks with the project’s oil industry partners, he is said to have discarded that goal. Besides, the oil companies would never go along.

What infuriated Republicans the most was Walker’s decision to sign on to

Obama’s expansion of Medicaid. Republicans thought the issue had been deferred, but Walker suddenly acted on his own in July. The governor said the influx of Medicaid funds from Washington would boost the Alaskan economy. “Every day that we fail to act, Alaska loses out on \$400,000,” he said.

Republicans challenged Walker’s authority to decide the matter without the approval of the legislature. They voted to sue. Absent a court order, Walker said he’ll go ahead on Medicaid.

A chief executive who defies the legislative branch, acts with questionable legality, and dares the courts to stop him—who does that sound like? It’s just a guess, but perhaps Obama sees Walker as a brother-in-arms, which would explain why he spent so much time with a little-known governor from a faraway state. ♦

# Lincoln Who?

Chafee's minimalist presidential campaign.

BY ETHAN EPSTEIN

**T**he Buena Vista University Democrats appear to have snubbed Lincoln Chafee, the former Rhode Island senator and governor who is running for the Democratic nomination for president. A booth they've set up at the Unite Iowa Immigration Forum on this late summer Saturday is festooned with signs and paraphernalia for Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, and Martin O'Malley—but poor Governor Chafee has been left out. The young woman manning the station tells me the snub isn't intentional—"We'd be happy to put up a sign for Chafee," she avers, "if he had any."

Chafee's is a low-key campaign; in fact, it's hardly a campaign at all. While even flailing also-rans like O'Malley have stickers, buttons, and entourages in tow (which makes the former Maryland governor's 3.8 percent average in Iowa polls all the more pitiful), Chafee's bid has a distinctly do-it-yourself air. Like a small-town banker running for a city council seat, he strolls around events in Iowa essentially alone, sticking out his hand to strangers and introducing himself, his unshakable grin never leaving his face. His campaign is capitalized like a small-town banker's, as well: In the first quarter, Chafee (who goes by "Linc") brought in less than \$30,000. Clinton raised more than \$45 million over the same period; even the socialist Sanders reeled in a cool \$15 million.

Chafee's accessibility and down-to-earth nature come as a genuinely

pleasant surprise, given his Brahmin background. The Chafee clan settled in America long ago, in Hingham, Massachusetts, in the early 17th century, later moving south to Rhode Island. They have a storied political lineage. Lincoln's great-great-grandfather was governor of Rhode Island, and his great-great-uncles were



Lincoln Chafee speaks in Clear Lake, Iowa, August 14.

involved in the upper echelons of politics as well. Linc's dad, John Chafee, served as a Rhode Island governor and longtime senator. They were all Republicans. Linc went to boarding school at Phillips Academy and then on to Brown University where he majored in classics.

Like many aimless rich kids, Linc sought out "work experiences" after graduation, and he ended up shoeing horses in Montana. His "finding himself" period lasted longer than most: He wound up working as a farrier for seven years. Finally, he returned to Little Rhody, where he was elected mayor of Warwick, the state's second-largest city. Linc was appointed to his dad's Senate seat after John Chafee died in office in 1999, and he then went on to win election, as a Republican (though a very liberal one), on

his own. In 2006, he was defeated by Democrat Sheldon Whitehouse—Rhode Island's partisan bent was just too much for even the pro-choice, anti-Iraq-war Chafee to overcome. Undeterred, he left the Republican party and ran for governor as an independent in 2010, winning a three-way race with less than 40 percent of the vote. Unpopular from the start, and with Rhode Island's economy a national laggard, Chafee declined to seek reelection last year.

And now, somewhat bizarrely, he's running for president. As a Democrat.

**T**he aristocratic Chafee has suffered a string of indignities since launching his campaign this spring. After receiving an initial flurry of coverage spurred by his (sparsely attended) campaign launch, where he proposed moving America to the metric system, he's been mentioned as a punch line—if he's been mentioned at all.

In late May, Chafee's wife posted online, "Does anybody from my Husband's staff remember his [Facebook] page access?" It seems the governor had forgotten his login. (*Bloomberg* headline: "Does Anybody Remember Lincoln Chafee's Facebook Password?") In July, a poll of more than 1,000 adults nationwide found that Chafee "registered no support." That means that literally *nobody* polled said they would vote for him. (*Mother Jones*: "Poll: Lincoln Chafee has no supporters.") Last week, at a DNC meeting in Minneapolis, Chafee held a Q&A session with reporters that was scheduled to last 15 minutes. The press ran out of questions after 7.

But that doesn't mean Chafee isn't eager to talk—or to go after the Democratic frontrunner in a way that even Bernie Sanders seems reluctant to do. In Storm Lake, he tears into Hillary Clinton for "drinking the neocon Kool-Aid." She was "much too hawkish as secretary of state," he tells me. And not just on Libya or Afghanistan. "Venezuela and Russia too," he avers.

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AP / CHARLIE RIEDEL

“[Hugo] Chavez was elected by the people. . . . It was a political revolution,” he says, criticizing U.S. sanctions on Caracas. And Hillary was far too hawkish on Russia as well, “starting with the reset button, which was *misspelled*,” he says pointedly (and accurately).

Chafee, who was the only Republican senator to vote against the Iraq war, seems to have been radicalized by the experience. The “neocons knew Iraq wasn’t a threat,” he tells me. It was a sinister plot from the beginning! “‘Faulty intelligence’ was hogwash,” he says. So why did the “neocons” go into Iraq, I ask him. “I don’t know!” he nearly shouts. “Maybe the oil?”

Despite the Vermont food co-op rhetoric, Chafee insists he hasn’t changed. “I’ve had a consistent journey through three different parties,” he says, arguing that the Republicans have become a much more right-wing, regionally centered party than when he was first in office. And, lest anyone question his bona fides, he reminds me, “Hillary was a Goldwater girl!”

That may be true, but Iowa Democrats don’t seem to be taking to Chafee. Unite Iowa’s Immigration Forum issued invitations to every single declared candidate, Republican and Democrat, to attend. Yet only two of the more desperate contenders made the trek to this small burg some two-and-a-half hours from Des Moines: O’Malley and Chafee. Chafee addressed the crowd for about 15 minutes, trumpeting that while serving as Rhode Island governor he had repealed E-Verify, and received polite golf claps at the end. The far more charismatic O’Malley spoke in broad platitudes about the need to show “compassion” and was cheered lustily.

Afterwards, the candidates decamped to separate rooms down the hall to hold meet and greet sessions. Martin “3.8 percent” O’Malley was mobbed by upwards of 50 people; a crowd of 2 gathered around Chafee.

But Linc is unflappable—and that unnerving grin remains firmly plastered across his face. He has a plan to win Iowa, he insists. He’s going to stress that he’s “the only candidate who has been a mayor, a governor,

and a senator,” Chafee tells me. He has a 30-year record of public service, one that easily matches or bests any of his opponents. And that’s all true—though he neglects to mention that all of those achievements occurred in *Rhode Island*. (Hey, I grew up there.) But even Chafee must realize his odds are . . . long. Perhaps, then, his quixotic presidential run is a bit like his career as a farrier; what the heck else is he going to do?

This is a strange primary season. Even leaving Trump aside, the longest-serving governor in Texas history is polling so badly he can’t even make

it onto the Republican debate stage, while a surgeon who has repeatedly likened America to Nazi Germany is surging into second place in Iowa. On the Democratic side, the 72-year-old career politician who secured a whopping 0.9 percent of the vote in the 2008 Iowa caucuses, and who is a confirmed plagiarist, is now polling at 14 percent in the state—and he’s not even running—while a self-declared socialist is looking even stronger. Strange times, indeed. But they’re probably not strange enough that Lincoln Chafee will end up anywhere near 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. ♦

## Among the Believers

A century-old mass organization cultivates an adaptable Islam. BY PAUL MARSHALL

*Jombang, Indonesia*

**T**he 50-mile route from Surabaya airport to this East Java city was lined with tens of thousands of banners wishing peace and success to Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the world’s largest Muslim organization, as participants gathered in August for its latest five-year congress.

There were banners bearing greetings from Indonesia’s president and vice president, from the national political parties, the provincial governor, and governors throughout the country. Officials of the towns and villages through which those arriving for the congress passed also expressed warm wishes. Not to be outdone, banks and investment houses displayed greetings, as did Honda and Toyota and media, telephone, milk, cigarette, and sundry other companies. Since NU, founded



*Nahdlatul Ulama members celebrate its 85th anniversary in Jakarta, July 17, 2011.*

in 1926, has some 50 million members, politicians and corporations wanted their goodwill and support to be well publicized. And there were reciprocal greetings from Muhammadiyah, the world’s second-largest Muslim organization (with some 40 million members), which was holding its own congress in Mukassar at the same time.

NU’s gathering was a great, sprawling, colorful, four-day business reminiscent of a state fair. There

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Members of Banser, Nahdlatul Ulama's security unit, salute guests during the organization's 85th anniversary parade, July 17, 2011.

were thousands of delegates, and tens of thousands of visitors and observers, though only a handful from abroad. The official delegates often appeared drained and strained since there were major and acrimonious disputes over election procedures for the new leadership, and the last sessions of the day did not begin until 11 P.M. But ordinary NU members were happy and friendly. I was asked over 100 times to be part of group photos. There was plenty of music from a large soundstage and scattered local bands, as well as an exhibition of NU-related art, myriad food stalls, commercial booths, foot massage stations, and endless vendors offering T-shirts, Islamic fashion, hats, rocks, toys, jewelry, buttons, CDs, bedsheets, and more. My prize: a combination cigarette lighter and bottle opener embossed with the NU logo.

The stalls also included serious items. Some advertised NU's many magazines, its expansive and growing charitable and social work, its 22 universities, thousands of schools, and millions of students. There were wonderful book exhibits and sales, from children's books on Islam to dense theological and philosophical works, including the epistemology and axiology of Islamic jurisprudence. I was particularly struck by a reprint of the 1922 work *Menolak Wahhabi (Wahhabism*

*Rejected*), by Muhammad Faqih Mas-kumambang, one of NU's founders. NU has been struggling against Wahhabism, the repressive Islam of Saudi Arabia, for a century, trying to counteract its inroads into Indonesia, including by articulating and promoting an Islam at home in a plural society.

This fit the congress's theme of "Islam Nusantara," or "Islam of the Archipelago," the traditional Islam of the islands, since Indonesia—with over 15,000 islands, half of them inhabited (and one of which, Run, the British gave the Dutch in exchange for Manhattan)—is the world's largest archipelago. Islam Nusantara emphasizes that, unlike desert lands, Indonesia is a country and people of islands, coasts, travel, trade, and ports, whose towns have always incorporated people very different in language, race, and creed, and which has cultivated openness to others—and so has Islamic beliefs and cultures compatible with diversity.

But Islam Nusantara is not meant to be merely a specimen of interest to sociologists of religion, a serendipitous local phenomenon conditioned by the accidents of geography. I was invited to one of the preparatory meetings to talk with NU scholars about the theological roots of Islam Nusantara. One of the main themes was how Muslims had related to existing cultures and religions when Islam was introduced—and

how they should relate to them.

NU scholars, and many others in Indonesia, are developing serious theological works seeking to understand, clarify, and expound this adaptable Islam for wider application in the Muslim world. One major goal is to counter extremism both abroad and in Indonesia—ISIS, of course, but also movements that have been active locally, such as the Islamic Defender's Front, Laskar Jihad, the Indonesian Mujahidin Council, and Hizb ut-Tahrir. NU's Islamic College in Jakarta runs a graduate program devoted to Islam Nusantara.

Its proponents sharply reject the charge of syncretism. Rather, they speak of enculturation—a critical appreciation of, and judicious incorporation of, existing practices—and the indigenization of Islam. NU chairman Said Aqil Siradj has called for Islam to be propagated by "respecting local cultures, not eradicating them." This manifests itself theoretically in Islamic works paralleling Christian discussions of common grace and natural law. It shows itself practically in the architecture of the older mosques in Indonesia, especially Java, home to over half the population of 250 million. Some mosques may be mistaken for Chinese temples, since several of the early apostles of Islam in Indonesia came from China, while most

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mirror traditional Javanese styles, with pyramidal roofs topped with ornate decoration but rarely with crescents. Minarets were traditionally rare: The call to prayer or fasting during Ramadan was announced with the beating of a huge drum, a *bedug*, which was used in traditional Javanese Gamelan music.

NU does not confine Islam Nusantara to debate and doctrine. In the weeks following the congress, in sweltering heat, thousands of uniformed men and women from NU's youth wing, Ansor, accompanied by bands, marched to the At-Taqwa Grand Mosque in Cirebon, West Java, a city with a history of militancy. Ansor's leader, Alfa Isnaeni, denounced the idea of an Indonesian caliphate and called on his members to promote Islam Nusantara throughout the country. Many more such rallies are planned.

In Indonesia, the congress was a major event. It opened with a speech by the country's president; each day it was the lead item on TV news and in national newspapers. But apart from the presence of diplomats at the opening and reporting by specialized academics, it mostly passed unnoticed in the West.

This is tragic, since a few days spent at the congress of the world's largest Muslim organization would reshape most Westerners' perception of Islam. While groups such as ISIS demand a many-sided, including military, response, long-term antidotes to growing Islamic extremism can only be found in organizations such as NU.

Historically, NU, like Indonesia, has rarely sought a bigger place on the Islamic or world stage. But now, with the nation's economy the largest in the Muslim world, and after eight successful democratic elections, both are reaching out, sponsoring reconciliation and educational programs in Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. There are even NU branches in the United States.

As we continue to struggle with bloody chaos in much of the Middle East, Indonesia, and especially Indonesian Islam, needs our careful attention. ♦

# Labor's Wishful Thinking

Unions are no panacea for low-income workers.

BY IKE BRANNON



Protesters near a McDonald's in Times Square call for a \$15 minimum wage, April 15.

As inconvenient as it may be, the forces of supply and demand are difficult to counteract—especially in labor markets. The Obama administration has exerted much effort attempting to do so over the last seven years, and it has yet to succeed.

Its latest attempt to suspend economic gravity was the National Labor Relations Board's decision last month that made it easier for employees of franchises and contractors to be considered "jointly employed" by both the immediate employer and the parent company. With this ruling, the administration and labor activists hope that it will become much easier for workers to

organize a union at the administration's enemy du jour—the dreaded McDonald's—and its ilk, which it fervently believes will lead to a substantial boost in wages and living standards for low-income Americans.

It's not going to happen. The problem is that there's no reason to think that if a union were to be established at McDonald's it would ever have much leverage to negotiate, no matter how much the government puts its thumb on the scale.

Unions are good at extracting higher wages when it's difficult to replace labor with machines and when labor is a small proportion of total costs. For instance, these two conditions happen to fit longshoremen perfectly, and as a result they have been masterful at negotiating high wages and benefits.

When longshoremen go on strike

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AP / CRAIG RUTTLE

they can impose enormous costs on their employers—as well as the rest of the economy. Since they can't easily replace the workers, port operators have little recourse but to quickly cave in to strikers' demands. As a result, longshoremen are extremely well paid—it's not unusual for a longshoreman to clear \$200,000 a year—and they may be the last workers in America who have a health insurance plan that has no monthly employee contribution or co-pays. West Coast port operators pay more than \$50,000 per worker per year for health insurance, a cost so steep that one health insurance broker told me the only way he could devise a plan that expensive would be to include regular massages.

McDonald's workers—as well as unskilled workers at other franchises and contractors—don't have this leverage. In fact, they have virtually no leverage at all. Fast food restaurants are already experimenting with touch-screen ordering kiosks and machines that cook and prepare burgers without a grill chef. It doesn't take too much imagination to foresee fast food restaurants that bear a resemblance to the automats of the 1950s, with many fewer workers behind the counter than today. And there's no reason to think that further labor innovations wouldn't arise to reduce still more the need for labor at a fast food restaurant.

Also, labor is a more significant cost for fast food franchises than port operators: Most of them can't easily absorb a significant increase in prices or pass it on to their customers. McDonald's, Burger King, and the like not only compete against each other, but they also face competition from local restaurants that serve similar fare and would presumably be able to avoid unionization, at least until the next NLRB ruling.

And it's facile to say that higher wages can be financed on the backs of the shareholders through lower profits. The shareholders (or their board) aren't going to let that happen and will fire any CEO who tries to do such a thing. The result of a

higher wage negotiated by a union is the same as a higher minimum wage: Some workers will get raises, but at the cost of lower employment in the unionized businesses. Prices will rise, business will go down, some McDonald's restaurants will inevitably close, and the ones that remain will hire fewer employees.

While some people might aver that a little more unemployment among unskilled workers is a price worth paying for much higher wages for the rest, that's not the tradeoff that proponents of unionization or a higher minimum wage typically offer. They insist that there's a free lunch to be had and that the government can impose policies resulting in sharply higher wages for unskilled workers without affecting employment or the health of the

business at all. Some even argue that employment could increase if wages increase, presumably through some sort of economic fairy dust.

The way to boost the wages of low-skilled workers is to give them skills, and the starting point is to make it easy for them to climb onto the first rung of the work ladder. If we want to increase the wages of low-income workers, the Earned Income Tax Credit is a much more efficient way to do so, allowing the government to boost the take-home pay of working adults without diminishing employment opportunities for teens.

Pretending that we can force employers to pay sharply higher wages without curbing job opportunities amounts to an economic fantasy, one that this administration continues to peddle to its gullible supporters. ♦

## Of Course They're Fed Up

The left blames economic woes on everything except its hero president. **BY STEPHEN MOORE**

Two weekends ago, the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City held its annual monetary conference in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. The left flew in hundreds of protesters donning green T-shirts that demanded "Higher Wages for America" and chanting, "We're Fed Up." The crowd was an assortment of college kids on their summer break, disgruntled middle-aged teachers, senior citizens, and blue-collar union members. Think Occupy Wall Street.

I attended the Jackson Hole conference and chatted with protesters who came in from places as distant as New York and North Carolina and

California. What was their beef? Two black men who appeared to be in their seventies explained the agenda: "We demand higher wages." "We want an increase in the minimum wage." "The Fed is intentionally holding down pay." "Corrupt corporations have all the power." "Unions need to be returned to power." A social worker from Kansas City almost sobbingly told me of the plight of the poor who she cares for in her job, of the "women and minorities [who] are being left behind," as she made an abstract plea for "social justice."

These were generally nice, sincere, and well-meaning people. They are hyper-concerned about the direction America is headed. They seemed to be earnestly parroting what the union organizers had drilled into

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them. They have no confidence in the decisions made by arrogant and elitist central bankers, and they are convinced that Republicans care only about the wealthy.

I would guess that 98 percent of them voted for Barack Obama joyfully and twice. What I encountered wasn't so much leftist rage—that only happens when Republicans are in power—but leftist despondency. They

joblessness, godawful schools, and hopelessness. Yes, of course, black lives matter. Yes, race relations have taken a leap backward.

But second, all of this has happened under the most liberal president since Woodrow Wilson. That is the unavoidable truth the left keeps trying to sidestep. Obama is trying to spin that things have gotten much better on his watch, while his

and may not be reliable. Ya think?

Meanwhile, Barack Obama and the left's biggest puppeteer/financial supporter, Tom Steyer, the billionaire green giant, keep telling America that the "moral crisis of our time" is climate change. That's easy for a billionaire to say. Too bad no one in the middle class agrees. All that progressives want to talk about is global warming, and yet every poll shows that out of the top 20 issues, Americans rank climate change close to the last among things they are concerned about. The moral crisis of our time is an economy that has left American workers without a pay increase for nearly 15 years.

The left's reflexive answer to *that* is to raise the minimum wage. But only about 4 percent of Americans earn the minimum wage and most of them are teenagers and young people who aren't supporting a family. That there are a growing number of heads of households working at Burger King tells us a lot more about the flimsiness of the Obama economy than it does about the stinginess of fast food franchise owners. In any case, what will a minimum wage hike do for the other 96 percent except make a hamburger and fries more expensive?

Obama, Hillary Clinton, and Bernie Sanders, along with the unions, also want hundreds of billions more for "shovel-ready" infrastructure spending financed by even more debt added to the \$7 trillion Obama has already borrowed. Japan has done that for 20 years and has been in what may be the industrial world's longest recession, while Beijing's central planners have built Potemkin villages the size of Chicago with empty shopping malls and vacant skyscraper office buildings. Government-directed investment means malinvestment, as debacles like Solyndra and California's absurd \$70 billion high-speed rail project confirm.

In other words, the left doesn't have many arrows left in its quiver to aim at slow growth. We've had stimulus public works plans, \$7 trillion of new debt, Obamacare, tax increases on the rich, three minimum wage hikes, Dodd-Frank, and bailouts, and all we got was an economy that looks like Cleveland.

DAVID PAUL MORRIS / BLOOMBERG / GETTY



*Hooray for our signs: a Fed Up Coalition protest in Jackson Hole, Thursday, August 27*

reminded me of the bumper sticker: "How's that Hope and Change thing working out for you?"

Many of these folks also sounded the themes of Trump supporters and Tea Partiers. At last, we have a consensus growing in this country on the left and the right—and presumably among many people in between. The wheels have come off. It is time to make America great again and rebuild our middle class.

So how should conservatives and Republicans respond to this pervasive despondency and fear? First, many of the left's complaints about the economy are regrettably true. Yes, wages are stagnant. Yes, the rich are getting richer and poor poorer. Yes poverty is a massive problem in America. Yes, college costs way too much. Yes, too many neighborhoods in cities like Baltimore are blighted pockets of crime,

own voters are saying they are getting worse. The latest Census Bureau income data show that since January 2009, the median household income has dropped by more than \$1,500, and the biggest percentage declines have been among single women, blacks, Hispanics, and workers under the age of 30—i.e., the heart of the Obama coalition. People aren't just imagining all of this. Where's the recovery?

During this era of malaise, the Fed has held interest rates at zero for seven straight years, and yet Washington and Wall Street are in full agreement that the only way out is heavier doses of this crack cocaine of easy money. At the Fed meeting I met central bankers and their gaggle of Keynesian economists who for the first time worryingly and grudgingly admitted that their mathematical models about how to get to full employment have gone haywire

The only excuse the left can muster is the sorry refrain of “secular stagnation.” As Obama’s first chief economist, Larry Summers, explains things: Two percent growth is about the best we can do in this 21st-century world economy. Now he tells us. When Jeb Bush and other Republicans call for 4 percent growth, the best White House economist Jason Furman can muster in reply is that “no serious economist” believes this is possible. These are people who drank their own Kool-Aid and can’t conceive of anything else working.

The left has gotten very good at telling the American people what they can’t do. They can’t stop illegal immigration; they can’t grow the economy; they can’t get people off welfare; they can’t come within a mile of balancing the budget; they can’t get an Obamacare website to work. Oh, but they *can* stop the rise of the oceans.

This “can’t do” attitude is pervasive in Washington and only breeds voter cynicism. It explains the rise of Trumpism. Even some country club types in the GOP join the left in sneering at Donald Trump for “offering simple solutions to complex problems.” I fervently disagree with much of what Trump proposes, but most of the economy fixes aren’t complicated. They are fairly obvious: cut tax rates, restore a sound and stable dollar, promote an America-first energy strategy, and roll back Obamacare, Dodd-Frank, and EPA regulations that are strangling American industries. That agenda could be enacted in less than 100 days, and, yes, it would trigger 4 percent-plus growth and a rise in what Reagan used to call “real take-home pay.”

Back in 2010 Vice President Joe Biden famously promised the country a “summer of recovery.” We’ve just had the seventh Obama summer without a recovery to speak of. No one in Washington or out in posh Jackson Hole seems to have a clue what to do. That is why voters are nervous and fed up. Now progressives can only resort to the excuse used by then-New York mayor David Dinkins during his reelection campaign: “I’m doing the best I can.” Voters believed him, and he got trounced. ♦

# Immiserating the Poor

More dubious achievements from the EPA.

BY BLAKE HURST



Members of United Mine Workers of America protest Clean Power Plan rules outside the EPA headquarters in Washington, D.C., October 7, 2014.

“It was \$5, right?” I was at a convenience store in northern Missouri, filling up with gas, and the guy next to me was checking his gas budget with the lady in the passenger seat of his car. He was driving what might be the last K-car on the road. He noticed that I had overheard their conversation and turned to me and said: “I hate dollar and diming it, but if five bucks is all you have, that’s all you can spend.”

The ongoing chatter about the income gap means inequality will surely be an election issue in 2016. I live in a small and relatively poor community in northwest Missouri. I’ve never heard my neighbors discuss income inequality in line at the local quick stop or anywhere else, although poverty is widespread. If my admittedly anecdotal evidence is any guide,

income inequality is an issue trickling down from the top rather than bubbling up from the bottom of society. That the national conversation is about relative inequality rather than absolute poverty is because the former issue is particularly vexatious to the academics, journalists, and civil servants who are driving the conversation. Although they have the kind of incomes my neighbor with the clapped-out Dodge can hardly imagine, they’re prickly, because even a couple with two low-six-figure incomes is an order of magnitude short of private jet and summer in the Hamptons territory. I’d love to know the average income of the folks showing up to hear Bernie Sanders, but I’d bet that few of Bernie’s fans are stuck in 40-year-old junkers with duct tape securing the brake lights.

While the president constantly complains about our country’s income

Blake Hurst is a farmer in Missouri.

inequality, two important environmental rules put forward this summer by his administration will only make the income gap bigger. When President Obama famously promised to use his veto pen and his power to issue executive orders to do what the Republican Congress wouldn't, it may not have been entirely clear that his activism would be aimed at people with bald tires and balky transmissions. His environmental rules are bad news for poor people in rural Missouri and the rest of the country.

The Clean Power Plan rule will lead to huge increases in electricity costs in states like Missouri, where coal provides the majority of our electric power. Analysis of an earlier version of the rule projected double-digit annual increases in electricity costs for the next decade, but the final rule demands even larger cuts in carbon emissions. The National Black Chamber of Commerce commissioned a study that predicts the average family will see its electric bill increase by more than \$1,200 a year. The average Missourian pays just over \$100 per month for electricity. If rates increase by just \$10 a month, then my neighbor's K car will be parked. A doubling of electric bills over the next few years will be a burden for many of us, but catastrophic for low-income Americans. All this for a barely measurable projected decrease in global temperatures.

The EPA is well aware of the regressive nature of the rule, so it commands states to provide aid to those on the lower end of the income scale and even helpfully offers some examples of programs that will pass muster with its enforcers. From cleaning up Lake Erie and reducing damaging air pollution in the 1970s to administering social programs in the 21st century, the EPA is the perfect example of a government agency that has slipped the bonds of democratic restraint.

The new Waters of the United States rule, which went into effect in much of the country at the end of August, threatens low-income budgets as much as the Clean Air rule

does. As farmers scramble to comply with the increased costs and lowered productivity that will result from enforcement of the rule, U.S. agriculture will struggle to meet increasing demands for food. World food demand is reliably expected to increase by 70 percent over the next three decades: It will be difficult to nearly double food production while the most productive farmland in the world is under the thumb of a government agency that consistently oversteps the elastic boundaries set by an inattentive Congress.

The new rule was written in response to two Supreme Court decisions that slapped the hands of the EPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

**When writing the new Waters of the United States rule, the EPA ignored two adverse Supreme Court decisions, and the result is a rule even more invasive than the EPA actions that raised the ire of the Court.**

for overly broad interpretations of the Clean Water Act. But the EPA ignored the Court while writing the final rule, and the result is a rule even more invasive than the EPA actions that raised the ire of the Court. In fact, mapping software that incorporates the new rule shows that well over 95 percent of Missouri is now a Water of the United States! Farmers, builders, local municipalities, and other landowners will see the present state regulation replaced with federal oversight. The rule has been met with near-universal disdain: The House has passed legislation that would halt its implementation; dozens of states are opposing it in court; the Corps of Engineers has written a series of leaked memos criticizing the rule; and a U.S. district court judge in North Dakota has granted an injunction halting its implementation in 13 states.

For those who remember their first economics class, there are two facts

about food that are everywhere and always true. The first is that increases in the cost of food are highly regressive. The average American spends around a tenth of his income on food, but people in the lower end of the income distribution spend much more, with the lowest income quintile spending over one-third of their income feeding their families. Second, the demand for food is inelastic. Decreases in the supply of food lead to commensurately larger increases in the price of food.

This summer provided a real-world illustration of freshman economics: A 10 to 15 percent decline in the number of eggs on the market due to a poultry disease led to a short-term doubling of the price of eggs. When unnecessary regulations hammer farmers' ability to produce, the resultant increases in food prices will harm low-income consumers the most.

We can ease poverty with any number of programs, from the Earned Income Tax Credit to food stamps to subsidies for health insurance. Heck, even the EPA's programs to help folks cut their electric bills may have some efficacy. But no antipoverty program can replace the satisfaction that comes from earning enough to pay your own way. My neighbor in the K car didn't discuss his life with me. I have no idea if he is employed, if he's broke because he doesn't earn enough, or if he's poor because he spends all of his spare time inside the convenience store buying lottery tickets. I do know that he was mortified when he realized that I had inadvertently become privy to his inability to buy more than two gallons of gas at a time.

Whatever the reasons for his situation, it is about to get worse. Not only that, but I'm willing to bet he'd much rather earn enough to pay his own way than depend on the federal government to replace the spending power he'll lose when his food bill goes up and his "electric" doubles. The greatest cost to all of us from the famous Obama pen is not the increase in the cost of living, but the damage done to the self-respect of those who can no longer support themselves. ♦

# The Next Justices

*A guide for GOP candidates on how to fill Court vacancies*

BY RANDY E. BARNETT  
& JOSH BLACKMAN

When Chief Justice John Roberts administers the oath of office to the next president, he will be flanked by three, and almost four, octogenarians: Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg (83), Antonin Scalia (80), Anthony Kennedy (80), and Stephen Breyer (77). The next president will likely have the opportunity to appoint a replacement for one, two, three, or maybe even four of those justices. These decisions will reshape the Court and how it reads the Constitution for decades to come. Republican presidential candidates will likely pledge to appoint “constitutional conservatives” to the bench—which ought to mean judges who will be constrained by its original meaning. However, GOP presidents have filled 12 out of 18 Supreme Court vacancies over the past half-century, with disappointing results. This track record teaches five important lessons that should guide future nominations.

## 1. Bruising confirmation battles are worth the political capital for a lifetime appointment

Presidencies last four to eight years. A Supreme Court appointment can last three decades. Long after the names Robert Bork and Douglas Ginsburg faded from the zeitgeist, Anthony Kennedy continues to have an oversized impact on our society. President Reagan initially nominated Bork and then Ginsburg to replace the retiring Justice Lewis Powell in 1987, but after the political process chewed up both nominees, the administration turned to a moderate circuit court judge with a thin public record from Sacramento. Anthony Kennedy was easily confirmed, 97-0.

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Placating Joe Biden, who chaired the Senate Judiciary Committee, irreparably altered our constitutional order.

President George H.W. Bush made a similar, but even worse choice three years later. Faced with a once-in-a-generation opportunity to replace liberal lion Justice William Brennan and thereby alter the balance of the Court, Bush faltered. Instead of girding for battle and burning the political capital for what would have been a brutal hearing—a preview of what would happen to Clarence Thomas a year later—Bush punted. On the recommendation of Warren Rudman and John Sununu, he quickly selected First Circuit judge David Souter. The “stealth candidate” was easily confirmed by a vote of 90-9. He would become a solid member of the Court’s liberal bloc, retiring six months into the Obama presidency (at the relatively young age of 69), opening his seat for the nomination of Sonia Sotomayor.

In 2005, President George W. Bush initially nominated Harriet Miers to replace the retiring Justice Sandra Day O’Connor. Miers was viewed as an easy

appointment, as her selection was supported by both Harry Reid and Chuck Schumer—which should have been a sign that something was amiss. Only after Miers withdrew, in the face of conservative and libertarian opposition, did the president nominate the far more controversial (and better qualified) Samuel Alito. He was confirmed by a 58-42 vote.

Whatever political capital was gained or sought in 1987, 1990, and 2005 by appointing a less-contentious nominee to avoid a bruising political fight is entirely dwarfed by the impact a justice has on our legal order over three decades. The appointment of a justice should be viewed on the same plane as a president’s “signature” legislative achievements. After the enactment of the Affordable Care Act, President Obama’s most enduring political legacy may well be his appointments of Justices Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan. Obamacare can still be repealed. These appointments are for life.

But what if a contentious nomination fails? Try again. For better or worse, the Senate can mount only so much resistance. The inconvenience of one or more terms at the Supreme Court with fewer than nine justices—even



*Like this: Alito, 2006*

through an intervening midterm election—pales in comparison with the repercussions of making a bad selection. It's worth the fight, and worth the wait. And this fight may become much easier. Traditionally, presidents had to ensure their judicial nominees would meet a 60-vote threshold to overcome a filibuster. However, in 2013, Senator Harry Reid triggered the so-called nuclear option, which eliminated the filibuster for the appointment of lower court judges, but preserved it for the Supreme Court. It is delusional to imagine that the Democrats will stick with this limit if they retake the Senate and have the opportunity to confirm the next justice. Senate Republicans are fools if they unilaterally preserve the filibuster only for justices. Republican candidates need to make their views on this clear.

## 2. Paper trails are an asset, not a disqualification

In November 2005, shortly after President Bush nominated Samuel Alito, the *New York Observer* published a timely, and timeless, article about “The Little Supremes.” This cohort of “earnest, platinum-résumé’d law geeks” have their eyes set on “the Big Bench,” so they keep “tidy lives because they think they might someday face a confirmation hearing.” One of the interview subjects recognized that “it is an unfortunate reality today that to be a judge, you cannot hold vehement opinions prior to the nomination and confirmation process. You can’t be opinionated. You can’t hold views and be loud and outspoken about them.” This perverse philosophy needs to be abandoned for the next Supreme Court nomination.

Stanford law professor Pamela Karlan was viewed by many on the left as a dream candidate for the Supreme Court. However, in light of her well-documented record of supporting various hot-button liberal causes, she was never even nominated for the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. Karlan was the antithesis of the “Little Supreme.” But did she regret it? Not at all: “Would I like to be on the Supreme Court?” she asked rhetorically. “You bet I would. But not enough to have trimmed my sails for half a lifetime.” We are not suggesting that Karlan should be a Supreme Court nominee, but she exposed the truth about SCOTUS-wannabes who “trim their sails” and limit their potential based on a fear of a future confirmation hearing: Such persons lack the character a justice needs.

Karlan explained this with her characteristic forcefulness: “Courage is a muscle. You develop courage by exercising it. Sitting on the fence is not practice for standing up.” Imagine what it takes to live your whole professional

and personal life as a “justice-in waiting.” These SCOTUS-wannabes spend their careers seeking the approval of others, in the hopes that one day they will be nominated because of their friendships across the political spectrum. Then, unimpeded by anything controversial in their records, they can sail through a confirmation hearing. These are the exact sort of people who will be cowed by the Beltway social pressures and the *New York Times* editorial page. Such willfully “stealth candidates” should be disqualified from consideration for the Supreme Court—the position in Washington most vulnerable to these influences.

When such people become justices, defending the Court as an institution will trump defending the Constitution. They will look to John Marshall, not James Madison, for guidance. Justices take an oath not to the Supreme Court, but to the Constitution. We need jurists who are fearlessly committed to the rule of law, reputation be damned. Former governor and now presidential candidate Jeb Bush, perhaps more than any other candidate, has

acknowledged this in recent remarks: “Today in America, the minute you have a record, you’re subject to attack. But that’s the best way to prove that someone has a consistency in their view of, in terms of judicial philosophy.” Bush is exactly right. Paper trails are an asset, not a disqualification.



Not that: Souter, 1990

## 3. Reject clichéd calls for ‘judicial restraint’

However, Bush faltered on how to read a judge’s record. He explained that, as president, he would appoint justices with “a proven record of judicial restraint” and a “proven record of not legislating from the bench.” These are clichéd talking points that didn’t work 20 years ago, and don’t mean what he thinks they mean.

Compare the two nominees of Bush’s brother. In *National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius*, Chief Justice Roberts found that Obamacare’s individual mandate exceeded Congress’s powers under the commerce clause. But he didn’t stop there. After finding the law Congress wrote was unconstitutional, the chief justice then employed a “saving construction” to rewrite the mandate so he could uphold it as a tax. This he did in the name of judicial restraint and deference to Congress. In contrast, in his dissent, Justice Alito agreed that Congress lacked the authority to enact the mandate. However, unlike the chief, Alito rejected calls for a saving construction. He would have invalidated Obamacare in its entirety.

Despite his insisting to the contrary, it was the chief justice who rejected judicial restraint by rewriting the unconstitutional law so he could uphold it. It was the chief

justice who quite literally drafted a new statute “from the bench.” In contrast, Justice Alito ruled based on his reading of the Constitution, and would have invalidated the law Congress wrote. “Judicial restraint” and “deference to the legislature” are easily manipulable concepts that distract attention from what really should matter to any constitutionally conservative voter or president: Who has the fortitude to follow the Constitution wherever it may lead and let the chips fall where they may? Any judicial nominee can claim he or she will be “restrained” or “deferential” but what exactly do they think “restrains” them? The popularly elected Congress, or the popularly enacted Constitution? Invocations of “restraint” and “deference” are designed to avoid this crucial issue. The same goes for deference to the executive and its administrative agencies.

Presidential candidates should reject the vapid labels of “restraint” and “legislating from the bench” and focus instead on what a prospective nominee’s proven track record and paper trail (see above) say about his or her constitutional philosophy. The heart of the inquiry should be whether the nominee is willing to engage and enforce the Constitution against the other branches, not whether they can parrot clichés about “strict constructionism” or “calling balls and strikes” during a confirmation hearing.

#### **4. Focus on the Constitution, not issues du jour**

**A**dministrations understandably try to discern how a nominee would likely vote on the specific issues that matter most to the president. However, this focus is myopic. If you had been told in 2008 that the Supreme Court would soon be called upon to decide whether Congress could compel millions of Americans to buy health insurance, you would have chuckled. If you had been told in 2000 that the Supreme Court would hear a series of cases over the next decade deciding whether the president had the power to detain suspected terrorists in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, you would have laughed. If you had been told two years earlier that a disputed presidential election in Florida would be appealed to the Supreme Court, you wouldn’t have believed it. Focusing narrowly on a few “litmus test” issues of the president and his political supporters disregards the broader constitutional framework that preserves federalism, the separation of powers, and the protection of individual rights.

More practically, zeroing in on a single issue, whether it is abortion, the war on terror, or same-sex marriage, has proved to be a miserable predictor of future judicial behavior. Nominees, who deftly refuse to answer questions about specific cases, have become adept at dodging these popular topics. Presidents should not pigeonhole appointments based on the issue du jour, but instead

focus on broader constitutional philosophy. After all, that’s what the Founders (and authors of the Fourteenth Amendment) did when they gave us a republican Constitution that would still work more than 200 years later. Provided, as Benjamin Franklin famously said, that we “can keep it.”

What is the constitutional philosophy on which Republican presidents should focus? In a word, it is “originalism.” In a phrase, it is: “Adhering to the original meaning of the text of the Constitution—each and every word.” Only persons with a demonstrated commitment to, and understanding of, the original meaning of the text of the Constitution should be chosen for a lifetime appointment to the Supreme Court and, for that matter, to lower courts too. Only a person who evidences in his or her professional life and personal interviews the character it takes to uphold the Constitution, even when a majority of the law professoriate, or the general public, protests. And only a person who understands there is a huge difference between what the Constitution commands and what past Supreme Court “precedents” have said. A proper nominee, in short, will be someone who grasps that judges take an oath to the text of our Constitution, not the text of fallible justices.

#### **5. Focus on clauses, not cases**

**W**hich brings us to our fifth and final guideline, one that applies to the presidents who are asked to nominate judges as well as to the senators who confirm them. In their White House interviews and Senate confirmation hearings, judicial nominees consistently refuse to opine about the correctness of particular Supreme Court decisions. And typically, they pledge their fealty to following precedent.

Therefore presidents (and senators) should focus their attention on the meaning of clauses of the Constitution, rather than the outcome of particular cases. Judicial nominees will always refuse to comment on the latter, and you can’t make them. It is much harder for them to decline to comment on the former. Knowing how a person interprets a particular clause, even in the abstract, would reveal at least as much about constitutional philosophy. And it wouldn’t take many clauses to appreciate where a prospective candidate stood. Asking them about the commerce clause or the “public use” requirement of the takings clause would tell us a whole lot.

Or consider the Second Amendment. Before the *Heller* and *McDonald* cases were decided, did a prospective judicial nominee rely on its original meaning (and was he or she aware of controversies about its meaning) or did the nominee think its meaning evolves or had been superseded

by modern developments? Is its meaning one of general principle or is it historically limited to particular practices in effect at the time of its enactment? Does it apply to the states? Why or why not? Going forward, does an individual right to keep and bear arms preclude all reasonable regulations? If not, must courts scrutinize such laws to ensure they are truly reasonable? Answers to these questions are likely to cohere with how a nominee evaluates other clauses far more than asking them whether they agree with *Heller* or *McDonald*. Indeed, less than a year after then-judge Sotomayor testified that *Heller* was “settled law,” she voted in *McDonald* to jettison the precedent.

And, to return to the previous guideline, would questions about “judicial restraint” and “deference” have revealed anything meaningful about a candidate’s stance on the Second Amendment? Of course, examining the meaning of the Second Amendment would be more abstract than asking, say, whether a ban on so-called assault weapons was constitutional. But that is its principal advantage. You don’t need to anticipate all the cases that might arise in the future to discover if a prospective nominee is a constitutional conservative. But you can’t take the nominee’s word for it. By following our second guideline, a president would limit him or herself to candidates

who have a record on the meaning of these clauses.

And prospective nominees should also be grilled on their willingness to reverse previous decisions that are inconsistent with the original meaning of the Constitution. “*Stare decisis*” is the dodge most used by nominees who don’t want to say how they read the text of the Constitution. (Sotomayor testifying that *Heller* was “settled law and Elena Kagan’s assertion that *Heller* was “the law going forward” are typical examples.) After probing how he or she interprets a few particularly salient clauses, asking whether a prospective nominee feels more “restrained” by clauses or by cases will best reveal whether or not he or she is a true constitutional conservative.

**W**e need Supreme Court justices—along with all other constitutional actors—to have the character and courage to follow the original meaning of the Constitution even when doing so is at odds with the political wind or previous Supreme Court rulings. By adhering to these five guidelines, a president is much more likely to identify justices who are sincere and stalwart constitutional conservatives. All the Republican presidential aspirants should take heed, and primary voters should demand that they do. ♦

## Honoring the American Workforce

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

Labor Day is a small but meaningful way to acknowledge the immeasurable contributions of the American workforce. The ideas, talents, work ethic, and sheer industry of our nation’s workers power our economy, drive innovation, and help keep America the land of opportunity. So U.S. employers are committed to ensuring that employees are fulfilled in their work, earn competitive wages, can provide for their families, and have the resources and support to lead healthy and comfortable lives—all 365 days a year.

Last year, U.S. private- and public-sector employers spent roughly \$9.3 trillion on total compensation, including approximately \$7.5 trillion on direct wages and salaries and \$1.8 trillion on employee benefits. In 2013, some 149 million Americans received employer-sponsored health insurance from the private sector. Employees received an average of \$11,204 in health care benefits last

year. And among employers of 500 or more that provided workplace wellness programs, 56% offered financial incentives to encourage employees to lead healthier lifestyles.

Businesses help workers save and plan for the future. Private employers spent \$222.5 billion on retirement income benefits in 2014, including popular defined contribution plans and profit-sharing structures. Life insurance is also offered to more than half of all employees in private industry, enabling them to protect their families in the event of tragedy.

Many employees also receive benefits that help them pursue outside interests and advance their education. More than three-fourths of employees, including part-time workers, receive paid vacation. And in 2015, according to a survey of human resources professionals, 56% of employers have made undergraduate educational assistance available, and 52% have helped employees pay for graduate school.

The strong relationship between the business community and the workforce

is built on trust, support, and mutual benefit. It is overwhelmingly achieved without the involvement of intermediaries, such as organized labor—which is evident by the dramatic decline in private-sector unionization. Above all, it is made possible because of our free enterprise system.

When businesses have the ability to compete, grow, and succeed, the benefits are shared broadly—jobs are created, incomes rise, and opportunities expand. We’ve seen the alternative top-down, big government approach, and all it has delivered is the weakest economic recovery since World War II, a sharp decline in new business creation, and millions of Americans who are unemployed, underemployed, or have given up looking for work.

The best way we can honor American workers is to support a robust free enterprise system that lifts the economy for everyone.



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# On the Frontline in Ukraine

*A Jewish community hangs on, despite the uncertainty*

BY DOVID MARGOLIN

*Mariupol, Ukraine*

It is late evening as we approach the second of three checkpoints on the road to the frontline city of Mariupol, in southeastern Ukraine. A vital port on the Azov Sea, Mariupol is heavily fortified by land and by sea.

“I try not to drive these roads after dark,” says Gena, who is taking me and my cameraman from Zaporizhia to visit the Jewish community of Mariupol. “It’s more dangerous at night.”

Gena flicks the lights on in the car, turns his headlights off and his hazards on. “They need to see us coming,” he explains. “Otherwise, they could mistake us for an attack.”

Our car rolls to a stop in front of a painted concrete barrier planted in the middle of the highway. Bright lights illuminate sandbags, Ukrainian flags, camouflage tarps, and a group of very youthful soldiers holding big machine guns, smoking as they talk.

The checkpoints become progressively stricter as you get closer to the industrial city, and for good reason. The second-biggest city in the war-torn Donetsk region, Mariupol changed hands between government and separatist forces repeatedly over a period of a few months last year, ultimately remaining under Ukrainian control. That was followed by a pro-Russian separatist offensive in September, which brought the deafening boom of rockets and shelling to the edges of the city. Although the frontline has since been pushed back by Ukraine’s army, it remains mere kilometers away from the city of about a half-million. A January rocket attack left at least 30 people dead, with body parts strewn across Mariupol’s eastern Vostochniy neighborhood.

*Dovid Margolin is an associate editor at Chabad.org.*

At the checkpoint, an especially young soldier sticks his head in through the car window and demands our passports. After searching through every bag and suitcase, inspecting our GoPro camera with particular suspicion, he finally waves us through.

“That moron was a volunteer,” says Gena matter-of-factly as we head back into the pitch darkness. Thousands of recruits have joined the Ukrainian military since the war began last spring, but civilians—no matter their personal political leanings—are most frightened by the volunteers, or *dobravoltsi*. Often ill-tempered, poorly trained, and trigger happy, they’re viewed with distrust by locals, who see them as little more than armed bandits. “Dovid, you’ll see what’s going on in Mariupol, the soldiers driving around in confiscated civilian cars. Sometimes they haven’t even had time to paint them in camouflage.”

After Berdiansk, the last sizable city before Mariupol, only one other car travels in the same direction as ours. When we finally get there before midnight, the city is eerily quiet.

“You see? It’s dead,” Gena tells me. “Everyone’s afraid.”

Mariupol is a city unlike any other still under the control of the government. Here, the war is not some far-off headache, one that affects citizens only because they fear being drafted (as men of almost all ages do in Ukraine) or are suffering from the severe economic crisis. For Mariupolites, war is the storm just beyond the trees.

“You had nothing to be afraid of coming here,” assures Aron Kaganovsky, the assistant rabbi of Mariupol’s Jewish community. “But the truth is it can all blow up here at any moment.” Throughout my time in Mariupol, I kept hearing the same thing: “It’s too quiet now. That means something big is coming.”

That’s exactly what has happened in the few weeks since my visit. The thud of heavy artillery, officially banned by the long-forgotten Minsk Agreement, has returned, louder than



ever. And the ones paying the heaviest price are the innocent civilians stuck in the middle.

If nighttime in Mariupol gives the impression of a ghost town, in the light of day, life goes on as usual. Down the block from the Hotel Spartak, popular with reporters, NGO staffers, and Ukrainian military figures visiting from Kiev, is Mariupol's modest synagogue and Jewish community center. Affiliated with the Federation of Jewish Communities of the CIS (FJC) and directed by Chabad-Lubavitch Rabbi Mendel Cohen, who moved to Mariupol with his wife, Esther, in 2005, the center is the lifeblood of the city's estimated 2,500 Jews. While the city Cohen arrived in was a quiet and unassuming one, circumstances have changed drastically since the disturbances started in May 2014.

On this morning, the synagogue's courtyard and dining room begin swelling with Jews of all ages coming to pick up the regular medical and food aid they receive through the center. Sponsored by Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein's International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, large plastic bags filled with staples such as buckwheat kasha and oil are piled up neatly in the dining room; medicine is laid out on a table in the sanctuary. Working through the FJC, the fellowship provides similar help to Jews throughout Ukraine.

While many in the crowd are elderly, a significant number are young men and women, university students and graduates who not too long ago would have been embarrassed to receive handouts. The Jewish community has undoubtedly shrunk in the last year, but the vast majority has stayed put, hoping to ride out a storm with no visible end.

"A lot have gone to Israel," acknowledges Cohen, adding that those who flee are usually closely involved in Jewish communal life. "But there are many Jews who are now appearing, people who might live on the next street but never came to anything before. Because of the situation, people are starting to understand how valuable it is to be a part of the Jewish community."

Breakfast is served after the distribution. At a corner

table, eating scrambled eggs downed with hot tea, is a boy of 17 named Jenya Yakovenko. Although Jenya—who also goes by his Jewish name of Moshe—is a Mariupol native, he is dressed in the white shirt and dark pants typical of a Hasid. Jenya's stepfather is an ethnic Ukrainian and he has seven non-Jewish stepsiblings, but Jenya, whose mother and younger sister are Jewish, studies at a Chabad yeshiva in Moscow. "I'm going back to Moscow in a week," Jenya tells me.

On break from the yeshiva, Jenya travels to the synagogue every day, a half-hour trolley ride from his parents' home in one of Mariupol's poorest neighborhoods. That area, not far from the massive Ilyich Steel and Iron Works and adjacent to a particularly harsh checkpoint on the road to Donetsk, is also one of the most vulnerable to attack.

"I'm not afraid of getting any stares here," says Jenya of the reactions he gets dressed so obviously as a Jew in Mariupol, let alone in the rougher neighborhood where he grew up. "Let them get used to it."

Jenya's parents, Natasha and Grisha, live with their 11-year-old daughter Nelli in a tiny house in the ironically named Mirny neighborhood (*mir* means peace in Russian), just on the other side of the Ilyich factory. The warm summer day and blooming vegetable patches mask the harshness of life in this broken part of town.

Natasha emerges from the house, the wooden door slamming shut behind her. At 43, she is a jolly, smiling woman, the daughter of a Jewish mother and ethnic Russian father who moved to Mariupol in 1989 from Kazakhstan to avoid growing nationalist sentiments there. Her smile and laughter belie the hardships her family goes through regularly these days. Sitting on the eastern edge of town, Mirny has experienced rockets and mortar shells flying overhead as the Ukrainian Army and separatists fire at each other from their positions.

"We've felt this war since the beginning, since September 4, when this all began for the first time," she tells me as we sit in the small living room, which doubles as Jenya's bedroom when he's home. "My daughter has started wetting her bed since then. I've turned to a psychologist."



*Above, part of an exploded missile in the Vostochniy district of Mariupol, January 25; below, a woman stands amid debris in a destroyed house after shelling near Mariupol, August 17.*



From their window they regularly see and hear Ukraine's anti-aircraft guns and artillery firing away. "Basically, it's pretty festive over here."

The Yakovenkos were never well-off, but now their circumstances are worse than ever. They receive fellowship aid packages through the synagogue and medical help from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's Hesed social services center. Natasha says they only survived last winter because Cohen and the synagogue provided them with enough money to buy the four tons of coal needed to heat their home. For the last nine years, Natasha's husband, now 60, has been working on an addition to their home, but since the war they've directed their limited resources towards building a makeshift bomb shelter out of a well in their small yard.

"If something happens, [our only option is] to jump in there, and that's only going to save us from shrapnel, not a direct hit," states Grisha of the cramped, dank space, which has just enough room to fit a crude wooden bench. "You can sit through a shelling, but you can't live in there."

Grisha has a tough exterior, but Natasha is open about the emotional and physical toll the last year has taken. She goes to doctors for her nervousness and says she now has problems with her thyroid. "If our couch is jumping up right from underneath us, how can we not feel it?" she exclaims. "Grads were whistling right over our heads! You know how frightening that is? Very!"

The Yakovenko most affected by the crisis, though, might be the brilliantly blonde-haired little girl, Nelli. Her favorite place in the family home is the shelter, to which she runs at the slightest provocation. As Natasha and I talk, the harmless sound of a bell can be heard ringing from the street outside. A moment later, Nelli runs into the room and throws herself into her mother's arms, crying.

"What, sunshine?" Natasha asks her daughter softly. "You got afraid? Don't worry. Don't be afraid, it's just the garbage collector. . . . Everything is okay." She sends Nelli out to the garden to join her brother, Jenya.

"And she says she's not afraid," sighs Natasha. "We once heard a sound outside and thought it was the

garbage, but it was a warning siren from the factory. . . . The factory promised that if there's strong shelling they'll turn on their siren.

"Come, let's go outside, I'll show you where Nelli hides."

In mid-August, shelling began anew around Mariupol, with the village of Sartana, less than 10 kilometers away from Mirny, among those hit hardest. Natasha and Nelli spent the night of Sunday, August 16,

in their tiny bunker, while Grisha took his chances in the house. Jenya, meanwhile, is safely back in Moscow.

"We went to the sea on Sunday, it was beautiful," Natasha says by phone. "Then we came back and it all started. I don't remember it ever being so loud. I was on the phone, and I screamed when I first heard it. But I'm okay now. The hysterics are gone."

The first number on her phone, Natasha tells me, is the rabbi's, followed by those who work in the community and in Hesed. "The first minute I heard a hit, I called the rabbi. I apologized right afterwards; it's not right that I call him whenever something goes wrong here. But he told me I should always call him and not to worry.

"You see, we're not needed by anyone, we're dispensable. The only ones who care for us is the Jewish community. I can't tell you how much that means to us."

Both the synagogue and Hesed have urged Natasha to at least consider moving to Israel, but she and her husband are adamant on staying put absent full-scale war. Citing everything from fear of missing home to health problems to lack of Hebrew

language skills, Natasha says she and her husband are happy Jenya is learning Hebrew at the yeshiva and want Nelli to follow in his footsteps.

"This way they can move there and have a better future," says Natasha. "I can go visit them there."

When I visited the Yakovenkos in late July, I asked Natasha if she felt abandoned by the world.

"You can't be offended, but of course I would want that people understood a little and looked at people like us, who have gotten caught in such circumstances, with compassion. We're living on a powder keg." ♦



*Above, Natasha Yakovenko comforts her daughter, Nelli, after the 11-year-old mistook a garbage collector's bell for an attack warning; below, the Yakovenko family, from left: Grisha, Jenya, Nelli, and Natasha.*





Demonstrators at the Robert Mapplethorpe exhibition, Cincinnati (1990)

# Who Won the Wars?

*It may be too early to say.* BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

In the early 1990s, amid public outrage over Robert Mapplethorpe's sexually explicit photographs, including several of private parts, Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) would settle arguments on the matter by pulling out his own. That the most avowedly conservative politician in America felt the need to carry around such a photograph shows how controversies over public morality were then dominating politics. When Mapplethorpe's photos went on display in Cincinnati, local authorities prosecuted

**A War for the Soul of America**  
*A History of the Culture Wars*  
 by Andrew Hartman  
 University of Chicago Press, 384 pp., \$30

the museum director for obscenity and child pornography. "I've been here four times already," one patron wrote in the visitors' book of a Mapplethorpe exhibition in Washington, "and this show disgusts me more each time I see it."

Between the administrations of Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton, there were dozens of such controversies—over constitutional amendments to ban flag-burning and permit school prayer, over

Andres Serrano's art installation "Piss Christ," over the semi-millennial commemoration of Christopher Columbus's voyages, over museum exhibits about Hiroshima, over feminist-authored parietal laws that required university students to give written consent before jumping into bed.

The Culture Wars, as they were known even at the time, pitted jargon-spouting pseudos from college Critical Race Theory departments against sour old housewives from organizations with names like the National Federation of Decency.

Received opinion is that the Culture Wars were picturesque, entertaining, and

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AP / BETTMANN CORBIS

irrelevant—a distraction from emerging problems of inequality, globalization, and terrorism. Andrew Hartman of Illinois State University disagrees. For him, the Culture Wars were a series of jousts over the legitimacy of the 1960s “counterculture,” with its new views of race, sex, and God. The counterculture won. Mapplethorpe beat Helms. Multiculturalism beat One Nation Under God. The Bra Burners beat the Founding Fathers.

Hartman is right. But the victory was Pyrrhic. It is early to be writing its history.

The culture wars arrived amidst propaganda and threats. The first programs in black studies (at San Francisco State College in 1969) and women’s studies (at San Diego State the following year) were not proposed by anyone. They were dreamed up by panicked university administrators as a concession to protesters, who were given a free hand in designing them. Such programs remained ideological as the years wore on. Nobody in the educational or political establishment dared oppose them.

When the Black Student Union at Stanford complained in the 1980s about the university’s “racist” Western Civilization program—which started with the Bible, Homer, and Plato and ended with Marx, Darwin, and Freud—out Western Civ went. At the height of Reaganism, the conservative president’s Equal Employment Opportunity Commission was bullying Sears Roebuck with sex-discrimination lawsuits based on flimsy evidence.

Hartman nicely distinguishes two pockets of intellectual resistance to this remaking of American institutions: Christians complaining about moral decline, and urbane “neo-conservatives” complaining about the decline of intellectual standards.

Professor Hartman attempts to write a balanced account. He accurately lays out conservative positions (e.g., the antifeminist Phyllis Schlafly’s case that “if men and women were legal equals, fathers had no obligation to provide for mothers”). He sees that conservatives were engaged in battles over curricula partly because they “believed the West-

ern canon unlocks the wisdom upon which a free society is based.” But there is no mistaking his sympathies. His summations of George Will’s columns and Patrick Buchanan’s speeches are humdrum, but he quivers with enthusiasm when writing about the gender theories of Judith Butler or the race parables of filmmaker Spike Lee.

Academic argot is Hartman’s native tongue. Things are *performative* and have *valence*. *Declension* is a fancy way of saying decline, and two things put together for any purpose are *conflated*. *Playful* is the highest term of praise.

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of Decency.*

In a logical jam, he will describe other viewpoints as evidence of *moral panic*, a term professors use for any moral judgment they feel safer dismissing than debating.

There are many canards here. Conservatives did not object to Hillary Clinton’s health care task force because “Hillary did not assume the matriarchal role expected of those in her position” but because it was a secretive use of government resources by someone with no health expertise, and who had never (at that point) been elected or appointed to anything. The entertainer Madonna was named by her parents; Madonna is not an “ironic stage name she gave to herself.”

Hartman sees that cultural controversies since the 1980s have allowed universities, bureaucracies, and courts

to reorder society. He sees less well that this reordering has often left the country less democratic and less free. He finds it “perplexing” that “religious authority dwindled even as the vast majority of Americans doggedly persisted in religious belief.” Occam’s razor will tell you that if authority is getting more distant from public sentiment, the country is getting less democratic. Noting that progressives have had more success imposing their views in universities than in museums, Hartman suspects the reason might be “traditions of academic freedom.” But there is another difference: Public museums are, at least indirectly, accountable to voters, and universities are not.

The counterculture killed certain prejudices—but it did so by killing off the antiquated-looking frameworks that once gave modestly situated people a bit of leverage against the powerful.

Hartman applauds the dismantling of these frameworks on the grounds that “the nation’s cultural gatekeepers were protecting racist, sexist, homophobic, and conservative religious norms.” Perhaps he is young enough that, writing for the newer and narrower spectrum of the ideologically acceptable, he does not miss the freedom, or does not see it as freedom anybody would want. He describes an observation the dissident University of Chicago philosophy professor Allan Bloom once expressed (about the failure of black students) as having been made “with no effort to hide his sarcastic tone.” Hartman often sounds like a Soviet loyalist, circa 1935, tut-tutting over the variety of things Russian intellectuals were permitted to say in 1905.

The culture wars were about not just whether the 1960s reforms were good or bad, but whether they were sustainable. The dust has not yet settled on this debate. The battles of the 1990s offered Americans the chance to decide how much of their traditional culture they should be willing to part with in order to achieve race and gender equity. The answer that progressives have thus far imposed—“All of it”—does not appear to be the basis of a durable peace. ♦

# Lying for Truth

*Wyatt Prunty, poet of the fallen world.*

BY JAMES MATTHEW WILSON

Half of Wyatt Prunty's ninth volume of poetry consists of "Nod," a dream-vision narrative set mostly in the darkness of a shopping mall parking lot in Atlanta. Standing there, a man, who refers to himself as Fulton, though "of course there was no Fulton," finds himself in an age so mired in inanition and meaninglessness, it is like "the flu before the fever touches you, / The ache without a place to point." He wishes it were otherwise, that a time might return when Hank Aaron was at the plate and "T-bills" meant "what they say."

But ours is a fallen world. Mulling life's disappointments, he is accosted by another man, smoking and fedoraed, who emerges from an "old low Mercury" and goes by the name of Floyd. In the car behind him lurk his wife, June, and a thin boy sitting "crookedly." The conversation that ensues is dreamlike indeed, and meant to remind us of those exchanges between Dante and Virgil in *The Commedia* where the poet's brief, naïve words are rebuked by Virgil's long and wise discourses.

Something is not right, however: Dante is about to be soaked in the atmosphere of the Southern gothic. Floyd seems to know all of Fulton's memories; indeed, he hears everything "in the white noise of" his air conditioner, and though he seldom smiles, he nods

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## Couldn't Prove, Had to Promise

by Wyatt Prunty  
Johns Hopkins, 72 pp., \$18.95



Wyatt Prunty

knowingly at everything: One shopping mall is like another, ours is a homogenous age, but Floyd has witnessed all of history, from Odyssean shipwrecks to "Ozian" twisters. Our protagonist refers to Floyd as "my smoke, my cough," as if the latter were the projected image of some future emphysema death. At one point, the two dispute whether the truth about things is a matter of the "right and fitting" or just a succession of facts to which we afterwards assign cause and effect.

For all the apparent non sequiturs of chatter, we see that this dream is leading Fulton somewhere, to a confrontation with the possibility that a "lie can tell you" something closer to the truth than the truth itself. Floyd promises this, but it is Fulton who proves it by retelling a tale from his childhood where outright misperception reveals a truth. He has caught an owl out of the corner of his eye, but takes it for a ghost, an angel, or, as his sister snidely remarks, "the Phantom," who is "after you . . . Because you rival him in ugliness."

Floyd answers with a tale more bizarre: "My daddy threw me out and down," he says over and over, because he had imitated and mocked him, and "now there is no getting back." They talk on. When Floyd turns back to get in his car, Fulton sees "Bird wings collapsing from his back." Is he another

phantom, like the owl from his childhood? A projection of a childhood lost, and future death? Or the devil, thrown down from heaven?

All three, probably. The poem is a dream, a story lived while one has nodded off. Floyd nods up and down, as if he knows the history of suffering and what history means. But finally, Nod is the place where Cain went, "east of Eden," after murdering Abel. Floyd stands in for the damnation of the protagonist's life, its failings—and also for the fallen world as a whole.

The story about the Phantom that Fulton gives us here Wyatt Prunty has already told elsewhere—in a 1993 autobiographical lyric. So we find the personal recast here as something more fantastical and universal. Floyd may be part of Fulton, but he is also the devil. Fulton may be Wyatt Prunty, but he is not only him, he is a figure of us all. And here we arrive at what makes this latest book a new and significant achievement in Prunty's work.

In his study of modern poetry, *Fallen from the Symboled World* (1990), Prunty argues that, while modernist poets such as Yeats and Eliot spoke symbolically in order to reveal the transcendent principles that structure and give depth to the minutia of everyday life, contemporary poets tend to be skeptical and reluctant to claim that they understand much of anything. The meanings they express are "local" rather than universal in scope, and the images they use are not symbols but mere "simile-like tropes." The contemporary poet draws likenesses but stops shy of claiming that likeness actually reveals anything.

This tendency may suit a skeptical age, but it has never sat well with Wyatt Prunty. His poems over the decades have sought to discover some justification and means for poets "to become good liars" again: to lie in ways that reveal the truth. Nearly all his work is built out of a loose iambic meter, following Eliot's advice that verse should hint at a permanent order even as it also represents its obscuring within the "futility and anarchy" of historical experience. Many of his poems bear down on memory, trusting the proofs of the past to show us something we can believe. His

narratives often imagine the world through the emotional lives of others, as in early poems such as “The Taking Down” and “The Lake House,” where women carry on through grief at the loss of husbands and sons. Sometimes, of course, Prunty just accepts the “Limited and quirky . . . comforts” of the simile for the good they can offer, as in two of his justly celebrated lyrics, “Learning the Bicycle” and “The Kite.”

The strange vision of “Nod” marks an achievement and a departure. Prunty

definitively leaves the humble simile behind for a weird allegory. He lets the certitudes of his personal past become the stuff of a spiritual Everyman tale with a Southern twang. For Prunty, to speak of being “fallen from the symbolized world” was once just a figure of speech; but in this new poem, we discover that, for humankind, to be fallen is a metaphor only in the strong sense of the modernists, by which I mean, as G.K. Chesterton once said, it is an empirical fact. ♦

men and women of good character.

William Skidelsky, the son of the biographer of John Maynard Keynes, is among these fanatics, a man for whom Roger Federer has been more than a splendid athlete, merely, but a symbol, an idol, an image made flesh of a world of perfection he has longed for in his own life yet realized he could never attain. His book is an account of his one-sided romance with Federer (the two personally encountered only twice, at press conferences) which along the way is filled out with a good deal of useful information about how the game of tennis has altered over the years and is played today.

Owing to the change in tennis equipment—chiefly the advent of graphite racquets, allowing the controlled use of topspin, and of co-poly strings that allow still more spin—tennis has gone from a game of strategy and stylishness to one dominated by raw power. Topspin, as Skidelsky notes, has become “the bedrock of the game.” The players have grown larger, with most female professionals 5’10” or taller, many male players over 6’5”. Serves are clocked at a blistering 130 mph and more. Players

now stand at the baseline slugging away with killer topspin forehands and two-handed backhands in what is known as “the power-baseline game.” The velocity of serves and strokes is noted by speed guns; cameras record and arbitrate close calls.

Watching television film of the tennis matches during wooden racquet days, one sometimes feels one is viewing the sport played in slow motion. The notion of amateur spirit—playing, that is, for pure love of the game—has also departed. Everything in tennis has become professionalized, with players now having what

they call “teams,” by which they mean coaches, trainers, and sometimes sports psychologists, on their payroll. A single goal reigns: Win the match, take the money, get back to the weight room and practice court, bring on the next opponent.

William Skidelsky is excellent at showing how tennis has changed over

AP/JOHN MINGHILLO

BCA

# Tennis, Everyone

*One way of seeing Roger Federer’s game.*

BY JOSEPH EPSTEIN

In 2008, at the age of 27, Roger Federer had finished his fourth consecutive year as the number-one ranked tennis player in the world, already won 13 Grand Slam tournaments, and made most of his opponents look as if they had come to play against him with a cricket bat instead of a tennis racquet. That year the *Onion* published a photograph of Federer, on which was listed his strengths and weaknesses. Among his weaknesses was cited “speaks fluent German,” “has weakened knees by falling to them in victory 750 times a year,” and “incapable of hitting a 120+ mph serve with his left foot.” The joke, of course, was that Federer had no weaknesses. He was, clearly, among the favorites of the gods.

Seven years have passed, leaving Roger Federer, at 34, no mere veteran but in that ambiguous category of athletes known as Older Player. People, recalling his past glory, have begun referring to “the old Federer.” Still very much a contender—he made

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**Federer and Me**  
*A Story of Obsession*  
by William Skidelsky  
Yellow Jersey Press, 288 pp., \$24



Roger Federer (2015)

it to this year’s Wimbledon finals—he is now far from invincible. If he gets knocked off in a tournament in the round of 16 or in the quarter-finals, it is no longer shocking news. Yet Federer retains a large number of fans—fanatics, really—who look upon him as the last remaining connection with tennis as a sport of elegance played by

the decades. He is informative in showing how technology has been the chief factor of change. He is quite marvelous in setting out the strange drama inherent in tennis owing to its system of scoring. Tennis is, after all, the only athletic contest in which one can win a match without winning a majority of points, or even games in the match. In tennis, not all points carry the same significance. The rhythm of a match can be radically altered by a decisive winner or unforced error, for tennis is more mental than most sports, its players more given to mood, shifts in momentum, drifting concentration, and leaking confidence. A clearly superior player will defeat an inferior player, but one superior player can lose to another for tenebrous, even mysterious, reasons.

The traditional spirit of tennis was irreparably altered with the appearance of two American players in the 1970s, Jimmy Connors and John McEnroe. Connors was the first self-congratulatory tennis player: fist-pumping, touchdown dancing when he scored an important or otherwise impressive point, revving up the crowd at every chance. McEnroe stopped matches to scream at umpires and linesmen when close calls did not go his way, all this in the name of an unashamedly ugly competitiveness. Both men, each unattractive in his own way, violated every tenet of sportsmanship once integral to the game of tennis, and left it changed for the worse.

The last honorable generation of tennis players was the 1960s Australian crew of Rod Laver, Ken Rosewall, Roy Emerson, Lew Hoad, John Newcombe, and Fred Stolle. Many of them were from working-class families. All played under the guidance of Harry Hopman, the Australian Davis Cup coach. They were first-class players, and Hopman helped weld them into first-class human beings, never evincing the least whining, bad temper, or dreary egotism.

The Swiss Roger Federer is, in some ways, a throwback to the great Australian generation, though as a boy player he is said to have been a foul-tempered, racquet-busting brat. In his adult incarnation he does not complain about calls that do not go his way. Nor is he demonstrative, restricting himself to an

occasional single fist pump after winning a key point. He never falls on his back after a victory, or kisses the court, or tears off his shirt to do a Tarzanic pounding of his chest in ape-like self-approval. He does not wipe himself down with a towel after every point.

Above all, unlike Rafael Nadal and Maria Sharapova and many others on the pro tour, Federer does not grunt loudly with each shot in lengthy rallies, thereby turning the tennis court into what sounds like nothing so much as a session at the old Masters and Johnson sex clinic, with the pock-pock-pock of tennis balls added.

Every Greek hero needs a nemesis, and Roger Federer found his in Rafael



*John McEnroe and umpire (1981)*

Nadal, the only player against whom he has a losing record. Nadal has been not only Federer's nemesis but, in style, stands as his antithesis. As Federer is smooth and lithe, Nadal is jerky and muscular. As Federer's game is seamless, Nadal's is punctuated by scores of tic-like interruptions. As Federer is calm and without obvious neurosis, Nadal is genuinely obsessive-compulsive and unable to play through a single point without putting himself through a panoply of ritual movements, easily the least elegant of which is picking away at the seat of his shorts. As Federer's career has been, for the most part, free of injury, Nadal's seems to have been played between injuries. Federer is a pleasure, Nadal painful, to watch.

Yet the Spaniard has had the Swiss's number. Skidelsky attributes this to Nadal's game as a great counter-puncher. "He hangs back, lies low, lets his opponents come to him," Skidelsky writes. Nadal is a lefty, Federer a righty, which means that Nadal's cross-court topspin forehands go to his opponents' backhands, the weaker side for most players: "Nadal habitually annihilates players with single-handers for one basic reason: his deep, powerful, extraordinarily consistent, violently kicking forehand means that he is able to wear them down." The best of players go down before the Nadal juggernaut, including, even in his prime, Roger Federer, whose sad record against Rafael Nadal is 23 losses and 10 wins.

Skidelsky compares Nadal to a boa constrictor, whose grasp is deadly; Federer to a leopard or cheetah, a beast of speed and beautiful movement. Of Nadal, Skidelsky writes: "I cannot stand the man or his tennis." Nadal is about effort, Federer about effortlessness—or at least the appearance of effortlessness. Federer is in manner aristocratic, Nadal a prole. I have myself elsewhere described Federer as Apollonian, Nadal as Dionysian.

For those of us who have added wasted adulthoods to misspent youths by continuing to follow various sports, the question of which athletes we admire or dislike tells a good deal about us. Show me a man who admires the retired Chicago Bears coach Mike Ditka and I'll show you a man whose first love is not subtlety. Those who despise the New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady—rich, talented, handsome—may have an envy problem. If you admire Muhammad Ali you may be revealing more about your politics than your knowledge of boxing.

What does his unqualified love of Roger Federer say about William Skidelsky? Admiration for Federer speaks foremost to a yearning for effortless elegance in one's own life. Federer is one of those athletes, rare in any sport, who make elegance look easy. Their number is far from legion: Joe DiMaggio, Willie Mays, Sugar Ray Robinson, Pele, Gale Sayers, Wayne Gretzky, Julius Erving, and Michael

AP / ROBERT DEAR

Jordan pretty much fill out the roster.

The late New York Giants running back Frank Gifford may also have made this elite squad. Although Skidelsky doesn't mention it (and as an Englishman not yet of a certain age may not know of its existence), an American named Frederick Exley wrote a book similar to his built around his obsession with Gifford called *A Fan's Notes* (1968). Exley's book carries the subtitle *A Fictional Memoir*, but it is much more memoir than fiction. Exley and Gifford were contemporaries at the University of Southern California in the early 1950s, and Exley remarks in his book that there was no way of describing the All-American Gifford's standing at the school "short of equating it with being the Pope in the Vatican." Exley writes:

Frank Gifford went on to realize a fame in New York that only a visionary would have dared hope for: he became unavoidable, part of the city's hard mentality. I would never envy or begrudge him that fame. I did, in fact, become perhaps his most enthusiastic fan. No doubt he came to represent to me the realization of life's large promises.

Messrs. Exley and Skidelsky have in common that both felt themselves not up to their fathers' standard of approval. Exley's father was a revered local athlete and high school basketball coach, Skidelsky's a high-powered intellectual and author. Skidelsky had the additional problem of an older brother to whom the life of the mind seemed to come more easily than it did to him, though he, like his brother, went to Eton and afterwards to Oxford. Exley suffered from, and eventually died of, alcoholism; Skidelsky tells us that he was long victim to depression, and spent eight years in psychoanalysis and occasionally pops back into therapy. His book is shot through with bits about his various inadequacies. At the book's close, he asserts that his obsession with Federer "was somehow integral to my recovery" from depression, adding that "thanks to him, I have sometimes felt as if I've been able to live my life over, to make sense of all that went wrong, and, as a result, to be a happier, freer adult." Unfortunately, it is less than clear

how his obsession brought this about.

Of the obsession itself, there cannot be any doubt. Skidelsky paid \$1,300 for a ticket to watch Federer play at Wimbledon. He travels to Halle, in Germany, to watch him play. On another occasion he buys a tent and camping equipment, and spends the night on Wimbledon grounds to be early in line for tickets. He is far from alone in his cult of Federer: Many Fedheads, lots of middle-aged women among them, travel across national boundaries to watch him play.

Not everyone admires Roger Federer. The long-retired Swedish player Mats



Jimmy Connors in action (1971)

Wilander claimed that Federer "has no balls," by which one gathers that he means he doesn't always tough-out close matches. In 2012 the novelist, Ben Markovits published an article in the *London Review of Books* called "Disliking Federer." What Markovits dislikes is Federer's near-perfection, the want of obvious weakness in his game; his "victories lack the sweetness of struggle, of obstacles overcome." He also doesn't cotton to Federer's "self-regarding modesty," or that so many people who write about him offer arcane explanations for his game, and are really writing about themselves.

Markovits cites David Foster Wallace, who in 2006 wrote an essay called "Federer Both Flesh and Not," for over-

kill in the line of metaphysics and mysticism in explaining Federer's attraction. In that essay, Wallace wrote that "the metaphysical explanation is that Roger Federer is one of those rare, preternatural athletes who appear to be exempt, at least in part, from certain physical laws." Later in his essay he wrote: "The thing with Federer is that he's Mozart and Metallica at the same time, and the harmony's somehow exquisite."

Roger Federer has acquired all the skills known to tennis: He has great anticipation, court sense, ways of disguising his shots, a vast buffet of spins and slices and speeds all under supreme control, great timing, and an uncanny ability to read his opponents, playing to their weaknesses and avoiding their strengths. "All this," as David Foster Wallace noted, "has exposed the limits, and possibilities, of men's tennis as it's now played."

True enough—and yet is this sufficient to cause so intelligent a man as William Skidelsky to pay out more than he can afford for a ticket to a tennis match, or to spend a cold sleepless night in a tent so that he may watch Roger Federer whack tennis balls around for a few hours the next day? Skidelsky argues that something greater, something grander, is going on. He hints at what it is throughout his book. He refers to "the silky wondrousness of [Federer's] play"; to his "timelessness"; to his being "both archetypal and unique, rooted in history, and seemingly untethered from it"; to the tension when he plays that "has less to do with the match itself . . . than with the ebbs and flows of his own performance"; to the belief that he "made tennis beautiful again."

Skidelsky attempts to establish what is behind the magic of Federer's tennis in a chapter titled "In Pursuit of Beauty." Here he brings up the distinction between beautiful and merely winning performance, and argues against the notion that "qualities like grace, elegance, effortlessness, and lithe-ness are mere superfluities, distractions from what really counts." What really counts, of course, is winning. Yet beauty and victory are not always coterminous. In contemporary sport, we now have the phrase "winning ugly,"

with the emphasis falling on winning.

Beauty in sport isn't necessary—with the exception of gymnastics, diving, and equestrian competition—but for some fans among us it is, finally, what draws us to watch athletes at play. Skidelsky notes that even to bring up this subject is to have one's masculinity questioned. But the beauty he has in mind, the beauty that drew him and so many others (me among them) to Federer and a few other athletes, is not in any way homoerotic but purely aesthetic. There was something balletic about a Michael Jordan jump shot, suave about a Joe DiMaggio home run swing, grace shown under pressure in a broken-field touchdown run by Gale Sayers. The beauty in Roger Federer's tennis is not so dramatic as any of these but lies in the balance and harmony, the order and cleanliness, the near-perfection of his overall game. Kant described such art, wherever it occurs, as "purposefulness without purpose," like that of a flower or a cloud formation.

Skidelsky quotes J.M. Coetzee (another Fedhead) on watching Federer play:

One starts by envying Federer, one moves from there to admiring him, and one ends up neither envying nor admiring him but exalted at the revelation of what a human being—a being like oneself—can do.

Coetzee compares the experience to that of "responding to masterworks of art on which I have spent a lot of time."

Beauty, the cliché has it, is in the eye of the beholder. Outside the realm of cliché is the sad fact that, in sports if not in art, beauty doesn't remain long in the possession of even the most astonishing of athletes. Roger Federer, at 34, is learning that lesson now. Frederick Exley's ideal, Frank Gifford, when last I saw him on television before his death, had blurred features and vastly thinned ox-blood dyed hair. The old champions sit in the center-court stands at the Wimbledon finals with mottled skin, bloated faces, receded hairlines.

Everywhere, in all sports, it is the same. In the ultimate Grand Slam match, that between the greatest of athletes and age, the score is always the same: 6-0, 6-0, 6-0, in favor of age. ♦

BCA

# Smart Power

*How and why gifted students are shortchanged.*

BY ANNE CONTINETTI

**Y**ou could have your students write tweets as if they were Martin Luther King Jr.," said the educational consultant leading our professional development workshop.

I frowned to myself, which is what I find myself doing quite frequently in sessions like this. We were being taught different classroom strategies that would help us to engage our students and, more important, differentiate our instruction. Teachers are always asked to "differentiate." We must teach the same lesson to students of varying ability using methods of instruction attuned to the needs of each student.

It can get pretty tricky. We're bombarded with professional development sessions, online resources, and word-of-mouth tips on how to teach students with learning disabilities, at lower reading levels, and from non-English-speaking backgrounds. What we are not often asked to do is make a lesson more challenging for a truly gifted student.

Moreover, writing 140-character blurbs that don't even need to be full sentences is geared toward a lower-level student (or teacher!) who may find tweeting more "relevant," interesting, and easier than reading and analyzing a King speech. I can't imagine high-achieving, academically gifted students benefiting from such activity, and I am pretty sure that students in other countries—who we always seem to be trailing—are not being distracted by time-wasting activities. When was the last time you read about Chinese students writing status updates for Chairman Mao's Facebook wall?

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**Failing Our Brightest Kids**  
*The Global Challenge of Educating High-Ability Students*  
by Chester E. Finn Jr.  
and Brandon L. Wright  
Harvard Education Press, 312 pp., \$32

Chester Finn and Brandon Wright must have been asking themselves this very question, for they have gathered together a vast amount of information about the education of gifted students in America. But first, amazingly, they find themselves having to defend the idea that policymakers should focus on gifted students at all: It's certainly more in vogue to discuss "educational equity" and devote resources to students who are struggling to read at grade level.

Gifted students, however, are most likely to make major strides in "science, technology, medicine, the humanities, and much more." These are the future leaders of America. Finn and Wright give us a wealth of statistics (including comparing our high-achieving students with those in 11 other countries) to prove that we need to be focusing more attention on gifted students—especially those from minority or underprivileged backgrounds—in order for our workforce to remain competitive.

Did you know, for example, that foreign applicants to American business schools (particularly applicants from India and China) are doing much better on the quantitative portion of the GMAT than their American counterparts? And as a result, some business school admissions offices have decided to compare American applicants only with other Americans because the Americans don't stand a chance against their international competitors?

Once Finn and Wright make the case for why gifted students need to be educated, they look at the challenges that come with educating this population, such as our ideological disagreements over how to identify a gifted student (it varies from school district to school district), the weaknesses of gifted programs (there's no good way to measure the efficacy of the programs and there's a lot of bad—and outdated—data floating around), and how “differentiated” instruction can make it difficult for teachers to spend enough time on the students who are most academically talented.

Add to the mix the fact that the political lobby for gifted students is practically nonexistent, and that parents who want to push “on behalf of their own kids often have options beyond what's offered by the school system,” and the outlook for gifted education looks bleak.

We must “place this topic firmly on the policy agenda,” the authors write, “and rekindle the debate about how to have a society that prizes excellence as well as equity.” But as obvious as this may sound to some, it's a tough cause to sell. Many education schools and education policy wonks are much more interested in what they call providing an “equal” education for all students, regardless of socioeconomic status, race, and ability.

Yet this notion of equity does not extend to gifted students. The vast majority of course offerings at education school is geared toward teaching the lower end of the spectrum, to close the achievement gap between minority or lower-income students and their peers from whiter, richer neighborhoods. And when the achievement gap does narrow, it's because lower-level students are making gains while gifted students are stagnant.

Improving the performance of low-achieving kids is something to be proud of, for sure. But it doesn't bring America's brightest students to the level of their peers in other countries. And it's difficult to persuade a politician to take up what is considered an elitist cause that doesn't have significant political clout.

*Failing Our Brightest Kids* is not a guidebook for teachers. I did not come away with lesson plans or ideas on how to improve my 10th-grade world history course for my most gifted stu-

dents. But policymakers and politicians who are willing to take risks to improve our education system for *all* our students should read this book. And then tweet about it. ♦

BCA

# The Phonespinner

*Are bicycles built for two?*

BY TEMMA EHRENFELD



**H**ere on Fire Island we must steer carefully around each other—and until this summer, I never saw anyone text on a bike.

Fire Island, as New Yorkers tend to know, is a sandbar south of Long Island. Few of us also know that it is connected to the mainland by a bridge that ends in a parking lot at Lighthouse Beach. Cars, with some exceptions, stop there. The ferry ride is part of the ritual: You'll often hear people say that “Fire Island begins” when we've shuttled through the hurdles of traffic and crowded trains to get ourselves and our luggage onto a ferry, and leave shore.

*Temma Ehrenfeld is a writer in New York.*

Once here, we get around by water taxi—\$32 round trip between the hamlet of Fair Harbor, where I stay, and the Sunken Forest, a national preserve—walk, or bike. The many hamlets tend to have one main paved street, which may give way to narrow boardwalks and patches of sand and must accommodate two-way traffic. These streets can clog up, especially when a ferry has landed. People pull luggage on wheels, jog, and bicycle, hugging a bag of groceries under one arm. Unwatched small children zig-zag unpredictably on foot and bikes.

The ferries do not carry bicycles—a sign reads “Don't Ask”—so bikes here are weathered residents, rusty, with foot brakes and without gears. To Fire Islanders, our bad bikes are part of the charm.

One recent Monday I woke up in my rented room in a shared house on Fair Harbor, feeling anxious. Some people come to Fire Island to party; I come in a quest for peace. I returned in middle age remembering that my parents took me here as a child. That morning, I decided to bike, one of my most reliable cures.

I had a choice among a number of bad bikes: The best had a rusted kickstand and a thick rubber ribbon wrapped around the metal handlebars that was trailing off on one side. My feet could just barely reach the pedals but the foot brake worked, and so did the bell. Those were the essentials.

As I set out to bike, I felt the static of anxiety fade. Soon I was moving along not at my Manhattan pace but fast enough to feel my breathing deepen. That's when I saw a boy, maybe 10 years old, pedaling with his left hand on his bike while staring at a phone in his right. He was coming my way. I rang my bell, veered to the side, and as I passed, called out, "That's not safe!" He didn't look up. Ahead of me were more children on bikes—a flock of them, all in motion and looking at phones. One was having a conversation. I stopped, awkwardly on the ill-fitting bike, and waited for them to pass. I biked a bit more, picking up a little speed for a block until I came to a child who was riding with no hands—and texting.

I passed him safely on the left. We were alone on the road. I almost called out "Not safe" again but decided it wouldn't help. Yet inwardly I was fuming: "Where are the parents?" I thought to myself. The least we can do is teach children to look where they're going. Then I saw a middle-aged woman riding toward me, gazing into a phone in *her* hand. As I approached, I glared at her, violating the etiquette of Fire Island, where strangers smile and wave. The woman looked up with what seemed to me a guilty expression before going back to her phone.

In Manhattan, I bike on the pathway along the Hudson River, where morning traffic can be fierce in its own way. If I pause or dawdle, fast cyclists will shout "Wake up!" or "What are

you doing?" I've seen bicyclists with phones propped up on holders, or strapped on their arms; some wear headphones. But I've seen no texting. (The laws, by the way, are creeping up on us: Chicago and Flagstaff, Arizona, have passed laws banning texting while biking, and New York City has considered a fine. Governor Jerry Brown vetoed a ban in California.)

Our highways are full of distracted and sleepy drivers. Nearly half of all high school students who drive, and some 30 percent of adults under 65, text or email while behind the car wheel. I suppose it should be no surprise that Fire Island, too, has been infected by smartphones.

As a toddler, I ran straight into the ocean, over and over, oblivious to waves, no matter how giant. A toddler's glee is joyous; obliviousness in adults and older children is not. To

me, Fire Island distills a modern idea of happiness as pleasure. It invites self-absorption. I have a friend who wants no more than to listen to music 18 hours a day, with time off to exercise and sleep. He's the perfect man for the Internet age, as so many of us aspire to an American dream of doing nothing much, or engaging in our chosen pursuits, on our own schedules—magically well-rewarded or as secure retirees.

But that sense of freedom critically depends on the labor of others. On a sandbar, especially, we see the extensive scaffolding of modern life. I'm glad the food is delivered and grateful the ferry drivers steer into a narrow slip, just so, each time. As may be heard in my wistful tone, I'd like all of American life to be more neighborly and courteous. But I fear a land of freedom without civic responsibility. ♦

BCA

# Attitude Adjustment

*The irresistible rise of gangsta rap.*

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

Just as Philip Larkin sighed that the sexual revolution "came too late for me," I had already aged out of rap as it emerged with enormous force in the 1980s. I was then in my twenties and, listening to it, I felt for the first time the same sort of generational disdain that adults of the 1950s had felt upon listening to rock 'n' roll. It was a lot of noise, you couldn't understand the words, and everybody who performed it was just too angry and hyper-sexualized.

This is all by way of saying that *Straight Outta Compton*, the enormously successful backstage melodrama about the rise of the "gangsta rap" group NWA, tells a story that has little resonance for me. I was aware

**Straight Outta Compton**

Directed by F. Gary Gray



of NWA—who wasn't, after all, as its key song "F— tha Police" created a cultural uproar in 1988 that certainly set my law-and-order tongue to clucking at the time? But my actual problem with NWA and rap in general was never really ideological, although my tongue-clucking did seem to elevate my aural distaste from aesthetic disapproval to a self-congratulatory moral sneer that makes me cringe when I look back on it.

The honest truth was this: NWA's stock in trade was in serving as a musical id, whereas I was one of those people who craved musical fare that

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*Aldis Hodge, Neil Brown Jr., Jason Mitchell, O'Shea Jackson Jr., Corey Hawkins*

would soothe my overactive superego. Even as an adolescent myself a decade earlier, I never found the emotional release so many others of my age did at the time in the angry white people's music of the time: heavy metal and punk. Quite the opposite. I did not want my anger reflected in the music I listened to; I wanted to salve it with beauty, wit, sophistication. My teenage countercultural weirdness—and trust me, it was very weird, there was nothing remotely cool about the American Songbook at the time—was playing the grooves off Frank Sinatra's Capitol albums of the 1950s.

What *Straight Outta Compton* reveals is that N.W.A. had plenty in common with Sinatra, albeit backstage. The movie is both a hagiography of the men who led N.W.A.—Ice Cube, Dr. Dre, and Eazy-E—and a warts-and-all portrait of them. They're shown as shy, sensitive, and well-meaning. But we also see them mistreating women, trashing hotel rooms, and partnering with psychotic crooks. In these respects, they were just following Sinatra's lead.

He was the original gangsta. Sinatra sucker-punched people and was arrested for it, ate bacon and eggs off

the prone bodies of women he had brought into his Palm Springs lair, and hung around with Mafiosi from his earliest days in Hoboken.

In his autobiography, Jerry Lewis (himself a man entangled with the Mob) insists that the anecdote in *The Godfather* about how Mario Puzo's thinly veiled Sinatra character got out of his band contract with Tommy Dorsey because a Mafia don made Dorsey “a deal he couldn't refuse” was an accurate representation of reality. He also says that Sinatra served as a bagman for Lucky Luciano. *Straight Outta Compton's* depiction of Dr. Dre's relationship with the horrifyingly violent (and oft-imprisoned) impresario Suge Knight suggests that, in show business, the sins of the Godfather are passed on to the children unto the fourth generation.

The difference, of course, was that Sinatra sought to make beauty, while N.W.A. sought to embody, personify, and reflect the rage of its audience. And here, I guess, one has to suspend a certain kind of judgment and pay obeisance to the market. Sinatra was a voice of his time, and N.W.A. was a voice of its time. And both have stood the test of time—so far.

The success of *Straight Outta Compton* raises the surviving members of N.W.A. (the depiction of Eazy-E's death from AIDS in 1995 brings the movie to a close) to the level of cultural elder statesmen. It's been 27 years since N.W.A. released the album that gives *Straight Outta Compton* its name. Ice Cube, who shouted “F— tha Police,” will soon appear in the sequel to his hit 2014 movie *Ride Along*—in which he plays a hard-bitten cop. (His son, O'Shea Jackson Jr., plays him in *Straight Outta Compton*.) Dr. Dre sold his headphones company to Apple last year in a deal that made him \$620 million in a day—and, as a good employee, released his first album in 16 years exclusively on his corporation's horrendous new Apple Music platform.

Meanwhile, the pop form they helped pioneer is now so enshrined that a hip-hop biography of Alexander Hamilton on Broadway has made its creator, Lin-Manuel Miranda, the most celebrated artistic figure in America. And as for the output of N.W.A. itself? I still prefer beauty to rage, but rage is infectious and multigenerational. For as Philip Larkin also said, “Man passes on misery to man / It deepens like a coastal shelf.” ♦

TOBER 13, 2021

ONE DOLLAR CHEAP

# PUTIN CAVES TO KANYE JUST TO GET HIM TO LEAVE SUMMIT

## *Grating Personality Used to Wear Down Russian Leader*

By ALGERNON CURRAN

COPENHAGEN — President Kanye West has achieved the first major foreign policy victory of his administration, securing key concessions from Russian president Vladimir Putin at a summit this weekend that had been called to calm growing tensions between the two powers. "Okay, okay. Just please make this guy stop talking," Mr. Putin was overheard to have said late Saturday night, before asking Vice President Kris Jenner, "How do you people put up with this?"

According to sources close to the talks, President West, who has no prior diplomatic or foreign policy experience, showed remarkable skill during the negotiations, wearing down Mr. Putin simply by expressing his thoughts repeatedly and without inhibition. At one point, according to a top-ranking diplomat, the president countered Mr. Putin's demand that the U.S. reduce aid to Eastern European countries by explaining the difference between Tang and Hi-C, and then just saying the word "Tang" for several minutes in a row. By Sunday morning, Mr. Putin had had enough. "I'll do whatever he wants," Mr. Putin said. "Leave Ukraine? Stop meddling in Iran? Fine! Just tell him to shut the [expletive] up already."

As a result of the summit, the U.S. has gained a measure of strategic dominance over Russia not seen since the fall of the Soviet Union. Mr. Putin acceded



WEST: NEWSCOM; PUTIN: WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

Vladimir Putin, right, listens as Kanye West describes the severity of his hangover.

to all of the president's major demands, including withdrawal of Russian forces from northern Georgia and dismantling of the Russian nuclear arsenal. The president also won some more unconventional concessions, such as making "N\*\*\*\*s in Paris" the new Russian national anthem and forcing Mr. Putin to post a photograph of himself with dollar bills stuffed in his mouth to Instagram with the caption

"PUTIN my \$\$\$ where my mouth is!!!"

President West was jubilant upon leaving the summit. "Hey! Yo! Putin, that's my man. We did it. We did for the children, for the earth, for the millennium. We did it for everybody, you, me, Putin, Taylor Swift, Beyoncé, America," he exclaimed, before concluding, "Tang, Tang, Tang,

*Continued on Page A3*