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P.J. O'ROURKE ON ANN COULTER

THE MICROAGGRESSIONS MINEFIELD

BY MATT LABASH

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No, They Have No Sense of Decency

On a recent Saturday afternoon in Washington, several hundred children with cancer and their families filled Lafayette Square, across the street from the White House. They came from all over the country, and from Canada, to participate in a two-day program called CureFest for Childhood Cancer. Organizers had failed to persuade the White House to bathe itself in gold light to show support for their cause—to raise awareness and research funds for childhood cancer—but they had been granted a Park Service permit to assemble in Lafayette Park between 7 and 9 P.M., listen to speeches and music, and then light 100 electric candles when darkness descended.

Unfortunately, they hadn't reckoned with the fact that the "Night of Golden Lights" coincided with the annual fundraising gala for the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, which raises money for political candidates. Since President Obama was the featured speaker at the gala, he was obliged to depart from the White House to be driven to the dinner—and, of course, would be transported from the gala back to the White House. Yet since neither the Secret Service nor the Park Service seemed to know which exit or entrance Obama would use, they simply cordoned off the acreage surrounding the White House.

This meant that the children with cancer, and their parents, who had already assembled to listen to welcoming music, were summarily ordered out of the park, which was then barricaded against them. They were not allowed to return to Lafayette Park, nor were they permitted to retrieve personal belongings—chairs and blankets, for instance—which they had been obliged to leave behind. After hours of waiting, many children were fatigued, or in urgent need of medication, and neither the Secret Service nor the Park Service knew when the president would return. So, at 10:30, long after their permit had expired, the children and their parents finally went home.

THE SCRAPBOOK always makes a good-faith effort to avoid invoking the Bush Rule: that is, to imagine how the press would have treated this story—young children with cancer and their mothers and fathers ejected from Lafayette Park so the president could attend a political fundraiser—if George W. Bush had been in the White House. And we refrain from doing so here since it is not clear if President Obama had any notion of the frustration and heartbreak across Pennsylvania Avenue.

But we do mention this grotesque incident for two reasons. First, because it is sadly typical of the standard operating procedures of the two federal agencies involved. And second, because the Secret Service's subsequent statement to the *Washington Post*—the closure of Lafayette Park was "put into place based on standard [Secret Service] protocols prior to protectee movements in the vicinity of the White House Complex"—is precisely the sort of tin-eared bureaucratese we have come to expect in such circumstances: "The Secret Service would like to express its regret for not communicating more effectively with this group concerning the timeline for protectee movements in the vicinity of Lafayette Park."

Note, please, that the Secret Service isn't sorry for its colossal misjudgment, or for the needless pain and inconvenience it caused a wholly blameless, well-intentioned, completely innocent, and law-abiding group of cancer-stricken children and their families. No, the Secret Service regrets that it didn't communicate its "timeline for protectee movements" more effectively to "this group."

Is there no one in the Secret Service, or in the huge White House apparatus, with some measure of common sense? THE SCRAPBOOK is entirely in favor of keeping "the protectee" in the White House safe and understands the need for caution and vigilance. But surely someone must have realized that children with cancer in a nearby park posed little threat to "the protectee"—who might even have enjoyed seeing the glowing candles on his way to that fundraiser. ♦

Actual Malice

Just after Scott Walker bowed out of the presidential race, the *New York Times* headlined "Scott Walker's Dismal Finish Is a Fitting Result, Old Foes Say":

> Old political adversaries of Mr. Walker greeted his dour denouement as a fitting result for a politician who they say began and furthered his career here with a divisive style, a penchant for turning out conservative supporters rather than working with opponents, and tacit racial appeals in one of the nation's most segregated cities. But the irony is that Mr. Walker was eclipsed by candidates who have ignited the Republican base with more overtly nativist and, their critics argue, racist appeals.

Where to begin with this one? You do have to love that the *Times* chooses to hang accusations of racism in the current GOP race on the arguments of unnamed "critics." The rest of the article recounts criticism of Walker's tough-on-crime campaign for a seventh district assembly seat in Milwaukee in 1990. He was 23 years old and running against a black Democrat. The sources are overwhelmingly one-sided. The details recounted are both dubious and old news.

It's no exaggeration to say that this article would have been transparently

hostile and less than illuminating even if Scott Walker were the frontrunner for the GOP nomination. But without him in the race, why bother at all? The whole endeavor reeks of a bunch of *Times* editors sitting around saying, "Well, the hit piece on Walker is already written, we'll just slap a reference to his 'dismal finish' in the headline and pretend it's topical."

If the article has any purpose at all—and this is a stretch—it's a shot across the bow of any Republican candidate who would dare point out that the crime and rioting in many American cities is pretty convincing evidence of the failure of liberal governance. Publicly desiring a state of law and order is just another racist shibboleth, and the paper of record in Bill de Blasio's New York has declared it so.

It's really a mystery why Republicans feel the *Times* has a liberal bias. ♦

Skewed Scorecard

In his weekly address on September 12, President Obama touted the Department of Education's new "College Scorecard," the latest, greatest tool to help high school students and their families make informed (dare we say educated?) decisions when picking a college. The website offers students a means of comparing schools—by graduation rates, cost of attendance after financial aid, and the average salaries earned by graduates.

"Americans will now have access to reliable data on every institution of higher education," said the president in his address.

Further examination of the site shows the veracity of that statement might depend on what your definition of "every" is. Several schools, including Hillsdale College in Michigan, Christendom College in Virginia, and Grove City College in Pennsylvania, were excluded from the listing.

The schools were understandably shocked by their exclusion. Grove City's president, Paul J. McNulty, released a statement calling the scorecard "incomplete," and saying that Grove City graduates "enjoy a well-recognized return on an affordable investment that exceeds national averages in all of the Scorecard categories."

In a statement posted on its website, Hillsdale College noted that it "is recognized consistently by independent organizations . . . as one of the best liberal arts colleges in the country."

As the schools sought to learn more about why they weren't included, things became more murky. When Grove City contacted the Department of Education for an explanation, they were told that "the site is limited only to Title IV [federal financial aid] participating institutions."

But that wasn't what Vivian Hughbanks, a reporter from the *Collegian*, Hillsdale's student newspaper, was told when she called the department.

"Hillsdale does offer bachelor's degrees," Denise Horn, assistant press secretary for the Department of Education, told the paper. "However, because the plurality of degrees it awards are certificates, not two-year or four-year degrees, it was not included on the Scorecard at launch."

A quick search of Hillsdale's homepage shows that the school awards not only B.A. and B.S. degrees but also master's degrees and Ph.D.s.

The real reason behind the exclusion might be what wasn't in Horn's statement to the *Collegian*. Both Hillsdale and Grove City refuse federal funding and have made such refusal part of their mission statements. It seems that

with the College Scorecard, the federal education bureaucracy may be striking back, trying in however petty a fashion to make it marginally more difficult for these schools to operate.

The Scrapbook shares the confidence of Hillsdale president Larry Arnn that students looking for "a rigorous, classical liberal arts education will find [it] without the federal government's help." ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

"Trigger warnings are nothing new. The practice originated in Internet communities, primarily for . . ." ("Why I Use Trigger Warnings," by Kate Manne, assistant professor of philosophy at Cornell, *New York Times*, September 20). ♦

Yogi Berra, 1925-2015

There's little doubt that Yogi Berra, the legendary New York Yankees catcher who died at age 90 on September 22, was one of the greats. Before he ever suited up for the Yankees, he was at Omaha Beach on D-Day, not quite a month after his 19th birthday. And once he did step onto a major league ballfield, his outsize personality soon began to rival his exploits as a player. But the latter should not be forgotten, even if Berra's athletic feats took second place in the remembrances last week.

Rob Arthur of *FiveThirtyEight* notes that, among all baseball players who have had 2,000 or more at bats since 1940, "No one else with a strikeout rate below 5.5 percent hit more home runs than Berra did during that period." In a game that rewards consistency, Berra was one of the most consistently excellent players we've ever seen. In fact, "21 of the 35 World Series played between 1947 and 1981 featured Yogi Berra as a player, manager, or coach," notes lawyer and baseball aficionado Dan McLaughlin. And now that we have the opportunity to watch the play over and over again on YouTube, we're inclined to agree with Berra, who maintained for the rest of his life that he *did* tag out Jackie Robinson when Robinson famously stole home in the 1955 World Series. As for the umpire who ruled Robinson safe, we can only note that Yogi had a point when he said, "You can observe a lot by watching."

As for Yogi Berra's oddly profound solecisms ("when you come to a fork in the road, take it"), some scholars think he's the most quoted American in history. Scrapbook friend Kevin Keating—who actually knew Yogi—published a fun piece at the *Federalist* on the catcher's life:

> I once asked Whitey Ford one day what his favorite Yogi-ism was, and Ford's answer now seems especially poignant in light of Berra's passing. After pausing a while, he said, "That's really hard. There have been so many." He went on, "But there was one recently that comes to mind. Yogi and I were standing out at [Yankee Stadium, 2002] during Old-Timers' Day. And they always flash on the scoreboard the names of Yankees who have died since the previous Old-Timers' Day.
>
> "And our pal Frankie Crosetti had his name up there—he had just died earlier that year. Yogi turns to me and says, 'Gee, Whitey, I sure hope I never see my name up there.'"
>
> It's safe to say millions of Americans who were touched and inspired by Yogi . . . never hoped to see his name up there, either. ♦

In Memoriam: Jake Brewer

All of us at The Weekly Standard were shocked and deeply saddened by the terrible news last week of the death in a cycling accident of our friend Jake Brewer, at age 34. The husband of contributing editor Mary Katharine Ham, Jake was not only a person of great achievement and remarkable promise, but a thoroughly decent and admirable man. He was full of life and lived life to the full, joyously and generously. May his memory be a blessing for his wife and family and all who knew him. ♦

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Hangers On

It occurred to me not long ago that, given my age and station in life, I should probably not purchase any more suits. Gazing at the contents of my clothes closet, there can be little doubt that I have more than enough to see me through the balance of my working life, and beyond—if, lest we forget, I am vouchsafed to get there. But I don't need an actuarial table to see that two crowded rows of suits and jackets—glen plaid, linen, pinstripe, tweed, gray flannel, seersucker, etc.—plus assorted samples of formal wear, ecclesiastical garments, sporting uniforms, and Scottish paraphernalia, ought to suffice.

I say this with a certain sadness, by the way. As the previous paragraph would suggest, I've always regarded clothes-buying as one of life's minor pleasures: not to be taken too seriously, but no burden, either. And I've been fortunate, too, that my income has allowed me to acquire the kinds of clothes I prefer—yet has never been high enough to afford the most expensive "designer" specimens, which I dislike anyway. Given the choice between looking like a British civil servant, circa 1970, and an Italian film producer, my answer is obvious.

I was prompted to think along these lines the other morning when, sitting in traffic at a busy intersection in downtown Washington, I couldn't help noticing that among all the males in sight—and there must have been dozens—not one adult, not a single one, was wearing a tie. Granted, it was Casual Friday, and the weather was warm; but the crosswalk was a rolling river of untucked shirts, blue jeans, open collars, and blended fabrics. Very depressing—to me, at least—and startling as well. The nation's capital is always described as a formal (as opposed to stylish) place, in terms of workplace dress; but you wouldn't have known it on that morning. Sartorially speaking, I have lived beyond my time.

Indeed, I couldn't help but compare this with the late 1950s and early '60s, when I began commuting, by bus, to school and various lessons in the city, and found myself sitting among the lawyers and federal bureaucrats

JORI BOLTON

and commercial travelers of the *Mad Men* era. I noticed that these gents dressed with slightly more flair than my father—who was a research scientist and comparatively indifferent to such things—and their style seemed to me a happy medium between professorial unconcern and undue fashion-consciousness. So my tastes in such things were set in stone at an early and impressionable age and have survived intact.

I take a certain pride in this, I have to admit. I am the rare person of my age, for example, who has no photographs of himself from the seventies wearing bell-bottom trousers or double-knit suits or those godawful dress shirts with collar points reaching down to the navel. My hair was longer in those days than it is now, and considerably darker; but there was never a guy perm or Fu Manchu mustache or sideburns plunging close to my chin. Over the decades, by contrast, there are snapshots of me in khakis and blazers and herringbone jackets and striped shirts and ties that, except for the decrepitude of age and expanding waistline, are indistinguishable from my present appearance.

This is partly the function of a reactionary instinct and partly the good luck to work in a business (journalism) where you don't have to dress to impress clients or satisfy trial judges. I can wear a bow tie when so inclined, and indulge a lifelong aversion to white shirts.

Yet it is also, as it were, a gender benefit. If you look at a photograph of, say, a group of (male) white-collar workers from a century ago, the basic uniform is fundamentally unchanged. Ties and lapels have widened and narrowed, collars may vary, vests come and go. The sleek fashions of the 1930s were more elegant, or so I think, than the square cuts of the 1950s. But I could stroll in my present suit of clothes into the Loeb-Leopold trial (1924) or the Army-McCarthy hearings (1954) or the second Reagan-Mondale debate (1984) and blend in.

This was brought home to me, some years ago, when I passed the first Brooks Brothers suit I ever owned along to my son. A navy blue, three-piece, chalk-stripe number, it was, by that time, about 35 years old and, except for a tiny patch in the inner leg to disguise a cigarette burn, in timeless condition. It was pleasant to be able to do so, not least because my own father was shorter than I am, and his clothes—especially a Harris Tweed jacket he purchased in London, which I always admired—I never could wear. But it was poignant as well: If my son were to cross that intersection in Washington while wearing my old suit, he would be very conspicuous.

Philip Terzian

the weekly Standard

Putin, Biden, and the GOP

Let me risk ridicule by mentioning the ruthless Vladimir Putin and the clueless Joe Biden in the same sentence: The emergence of Putin abroad and Biden at home could reshape the 2016 Republican presidential race.

Putin: The decline in American power and prestige under our current president, culminating in the deal with Iran, has become so pronounced that Putin's Russia has virtually replaced Obama's America as the center of gravity in Middle East politics. Under Obama, the White House is still the world's premier venue for fancy receptions. But the Kremlin is where the work gets done.

The world that awaits us?

How have the Republican candidates for president reacted to this extraordinary development? Have they reacted at all? They say many of the right things. But have they adjusted to the gravity of the moment? Do they grasp the magnitude of the task that would lie before them as president in a post-Iran deal, post-Syria collapse, post-occupied Ukraine, post-rise of ISIS world? At best, the jury is still out.

Biden: Meanwhile, on the domestic scene, the odds are increasing that the Democratic ticket in 2016 will consist of Joe Biden and Elizabeth Warren. Republicans have assumed that Hillary Clinton would be the nominee. If she were, the election would be in large measure a referendum on Hillary, and that would be on the whole favorable to Republicans. A Biden-Warren ticket complicates things.

It's true that making the case for what will in effect be a third Obama term would be a burden for Biden. On the other hand, running with Warren would adjust the economic message in a more populist direction. And Biden would remind voters that though growth has been tepid, there's been no recession on Obama's watch, to say nothing of a major financial meltdown. As for foreign policy, he'll point out we've gotten out of the wars we were fighting and entered no new ones, and he'll dare Republicans to really convince voters that the world has become much more dangerous on Obama's watch.

Such a strategy wouldn't give a Biden-led ticket better than a 50-50 chance in 2016; but it probably would give Democrats a better chance than a Hillary ticket. Consider the new Quinnipiac poll, released September 24. Hillary Clinton loses narrowly to almost every GOP candidate against whom she's tested. Joe Biden wins narrowly. It's only a difference of a few points, but in today's highly polarized environment, with just a small slice of swing voters, that's how general elections tend to be decided. The two key findings from the survey: Hillary Clinton's favorable/unfavorable rating among all voters is 41 percent to 55 percent. Joe Biden's is 50 percent to 34 percent. That difference could turn a losing Democratic campaign into a winning one.

Indeed, the only Republicans with better net favorability than Biden are Ben Carson and Carly Fiorina. Carson is a fine man but will not be the nominee. Fiorina may or may not rise to the occasion. Marco Rubio and John Kasich are the only other Republicans within hailing distance of Biden—but they're not nearly as well known, and haven't been subjected to a real negative assault. The other Republicans are underwater.

All of this raises the specter of a 1988-type campaign, where an incumbent vice president is able to exploit weaknesses in the record of an inexperienced challenger to make it through to victory. We believe the current field of Republican candidates is superior to Michael Dukakis. But so did the Democrats in 1987 believe Michael Dukakis would prove a superior candidate.

Republicans have been telling themselves that this is the strongest field in years, and that the GOP has a deep bench. But as Sean Trende pointed out at *Real Clear Politics* this week, the two aren't quite the same thing. It *is* a *deep* field, with lots of credible, reasonably impressive candidates. But a deep field doesn't guarantee a strong nominee. It's like having a pitching staff with lots of above-average pitchers. It's better than not having them—but in the playoffs you need an ace or two. Will the Republican field produce an ace?

It's only the end of September. In 1979, Ronald Reagan announced his candidacy in November. In 1991, Bill

IMAGES: NEWSCOM

Clinton announced his in October. This year, Scott Walker went from frontrunner to ex-candidate in 10 weeks. In an extraordinarily fluid and volatile environment, there's plenty of time for the current candidates to up their game. And there's even time for a new candidate or two to get in. Republicans can't count on coasting to victory behind a journeyman nominee.

And if Republicans don't win, we face the prospect of living in Vladimir Putin's world and Joe Biden's America.

—William Kristol

Putting Defense First

With the new fiscal year for the federal government rapidly approaching, the irresponsible and dangerous game of chicken being played with national defense continues. For most of the year, the White House and Democrats have made it clear that they will block passage of defense authorization and appropriations bills that contain some $38 billion in new defense resources unless the Republican majority in Congress agrees to boost domestic discretionary spending by an equal amount. Last week, Senate Democrats made good on that threat by blocking a vote on the defense appropriations bill. Given the state of the world, given the state of the U.S. military, this is about as irresponsible as it gets. But being irresponsible has become something of an art form for this White House.

Yet it would also be irresponsible if Republicans didn't hold their noses and at least seek a compromise with congressional Democrats and the Obama administration for the sake of national defense. Lacking the presidency, Republicans won't be able to insist on the right outcome—an increase for defense without buying off the Democrats with extra domestic spending. They could take a shot at passing that kind of continuing resolution (CR) first. But if they hold a strict line on domestic spending, the result will be a short-term CR that leaves an already hardpressed military with fewer resources, prevents any new program starts to modernize the force, and perhaps forces the cancellation or renegotiation of contracts already on the books.

Worse still, a short-term CR may well lead to a yearlong continuing resolution in which defense spending would actually be less than the sequestration budget cap's own onerous requirement for the year. And a CR for this upcoming year would almost certainly guarantee a CR for much of the following year as members of both parties put off any and all hard votes during an election year.

So it's going to be necessary to compromise. If that means congressional Republicans agreeing with Pelosi Democrats on a dollar-for-dollar increase in both defense and domestic spending, so be it. The goal should be to do no more harm to a military that is already in dire straits.

Do Republicans, for lack of a compromise now, want to hand a possible incoming Republican administration an even more hollowed-out military? Do they really want to put the next president in the position of having to deal with multiple crises in the Middle East, East Asia, and Eastern Europe with a military that is spread thin, using older and even more worn-out equipment that is, by the Pentagon's account, not going to be combat ready? The administration has made clear that it wants to enshrine "leading from behind" as the new American way of war by ensuring its successor has no better option. Is this the predicament Republicans want to hand the next chief executive?

Republicans seem to believe that the hole the military is in is of recent vintage—a product of the Obama years—and, as such, can be reversed in short order. But the drawdown of America's military capabilities has been going on since the early 1990s. Bush I, faced with a recession, cut defense below what his administration had previously said was needed for a post-Cold War era. President Clinton's team then slashed men and programs even further, leading commentators to refer to their time in office as the era of "the procurement holiday." And despite Dick Cheney's famous utterance during the 2000 campaign that "help is on the way" for the military, Bush II's OMB killed any notions of an immediate fix by allowing only the most marginal bump up for defense in its first budget request.

It's of course true that total defense spending grew following 9/11. But the bulk of that increase was tied to fighting the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, plussing-up maintenance accounts to keep older platforms in the field, and adding money to personnel accounts to keep the exceptional all-volunteer force in the fight through its constant deployments. The added funds, as one prominent defense analyst has noted, produced no "significant modernization of the military." In short, well before the Obama team arrived and started cutting defense programs, and well before the bipartisan suicide pact of the Budget Control Act of 2011 was enacted into law, the American military was in trouble.

No doubt compromising with the president would be a hard pill to swallow. And, certainly, the deficit would increase—perhaps as much as 15 percent. Deficits matter, but as Ronald Reagan understood, absent American military preeminence the world will only get more dangerous and the very stability needed for economic growth—and deficit reduction—will surely disappear.

The responsible thing for Republicans to do is to get on with cutting a deal with Democrats to make sure the government meets its fundamental duty to ensure the nation's security. The sooner the better.

—Gary Schmitt & Thomas Donnelly

What Next?

Netanyahu calls on Putin.

It's been two weeks since a majority of Congress sought to register its disapproval of the Iran deal but fell short of the votes necessary to break a filibuster or override a presidential veto, and most politicians and commentators have moved on.

It's understandable to want a mental break after a long and hard-fought struggle. But the world hasn't taken a break. The consequences of the deal are already reverberating.

On Monday, September 21, Iran self-inspected a key suspect nuclear weapons site without international inspectors present. "This deal is not built on trust," President Obama had told us. "It is built on verification." But apparently we trust Iran to carry out that verification. That same day, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu held a two-and-a-half-hour emergency meeting with Russian president Vladimir Putin (followed by a meeting of Russian and Israeli military chiefs) to discuss Russia's military presence in Syria.

The front page of the *Wall Street Journal* on September 22 captured the new Middle East, with a picture of Netanyahu meeting Putin at the top, and below it the headline "Russia, Iran Team Up in Syria." Putin is depicted as the central player with whom sworn enemies Iran and Israel have to deal. And where is the United States? At best, watching from behind. At worst, making life more difficult for our friends and allies. We've become like William Macy in the 2003 movie *The Cooler*, whose very presence and proximity turns people's luck bad.

Such is the strategic reality that has emerged from the Iran deal. It has put an exclamation point on a collapse of American leadership that had been building during the entire Obama administration (and the last part of the Bush administration, too). It signaled a decisive reversal of decades of American dominance of the Middle East. Following our feckless blunders in withdrawing from Iraq, drawing but not enforcing a red line in Syria, and declaring quasi-war but doing very little against the Islamic State, the Iran deal was the straw that broke the camel's back of American credibility in the region. It blessed the emergence, 15 years hence, of a nuclear-weapons-capable and ballistic-missile-armed Iran, enriched and empowered a vehemently anti-American and anti-Israeli, terrorist-supporting regime, and spurred nuclear proliferation in the region.

What is to be done? We can mitigate some of the deal's costs in the near term, walk away from it as soon as possible, and act to prevent rather than enable or try to contain a nuclear-armed Iran. These must be fundamental elements of any successful U.S. national security policy.

How does one begin?

First, don't obsess about sanctions. Recognize that eagerness to do *something* can get in the way of doing what is needed. Sanctions can be an important tool of foreign policy, but they are a limited tool. Lawmakers concerned about the threat of Iran's nuclear program naturally gravitated toward sanctions as one of the few areas where the legislative branch can lead and set foreign policy. But this also gave many members of Congress an easy but ultimately ineffective out. Sanctions did not succeed in pressuring the regime in Tehran to cease its nuclear program. Even as they damaged Iran's economy, the regime continued installing new centrifuges. Obama was right when he said, "Sanctions alone are not going to force Iran to completely dismantle all vestiges of its nuclear infrastructure." Sanctions are only one supporting element of a new policy against Iran.

Second, stick to what works. The sanctions fixation obscured a strategy that actually has an empirical record of reining in illicit nuclear programs: a credible military threat. Tehran suspended parts of its nuclear program in 2003-04, when the mullahs worried they'd be next after the United States toppled Saddam Hussein. The Iraq war also led Muammar Qaddafi to destroy his nuclear program. More recently, in September 2012, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu drew a red line at Iran acquiring a bomb's worth—about 155 kilograms—of 20 percent enriched uranium. At the time, Iran was already dangerously close to this threshold; but it never crossed it. Hearing and, more important, believing Netanyahu's implicit threat, Iran chose to keep its stockpile from exceeding Israel's red line.

Third, the next president—especially if he or she wisely walks away from the deal—must use this credible military option not only to prevent Iran from going nuclear but also to confront Iran more broadly in the region. We can never be safe, nor can we ever regain international credibility, if Iran develops nuclear bombs or runs free as a dominant regional power. Attaining the capability to prevent these things will require freeing the U.S. military from the shackles of sequestration and boosting its capacity in the Middle East and beyond.

We have compared this period to the late 1930s, when the West, tired of war, failed to confront the strategic challenge of Nazi Germany. Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin fiddled as Europe began to burn. But even in Baldwin's last year in office British military spending increased significantly, and it

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rose further under Neville Chamberlain, a total of 83 percent between 1936 and 1939. At least Chamberlain recognized that Britain had to rearm, even while he pursued appeasement.

Obama, however, is slashing defense budgets. After five years of sequestration, the United States is on course to have the smallest Army since 1940 and the smallest Navy since 1930. As a group of retired high-ranking military leaders put it in a report commissioned by the Jewish Institute for Natioal Security Affairs: "Should the worst happen—should Iran threaten the security of our allies, should it decide, after 15 years, to sprint for a nuclear weapons capability—the U.S. armed forces will rise to challenge, but they will do so with less manpower, fewer capabilities, more antiquated platforms and a lower level of readiness than they have now or have had in a very long time." It is amazing—and appalling—that the United States will not have an aircraft carrier in the Persian Gulf as the Iran deal goes into effect. The United States must also continue efforts to develop weapons to defend against Iranian aggression—particularly missile defense systems—as well as, if necessary, to degrade and destroy their nuclear infrastructure, whether through cyber-attack or the 30,000-pound, bunker-busting, Fordow-penetrating Massive Ordinance Penetrator (MOP).

Fourth, boost the military capability of Israel and of our Arab allies, while ensuring Israel retains its qualitative military edge. The United States can help Israel acquire the tools to be more self-reliant both in its offensive and defensive capabilities. Congress has a big role to play here. Congress, with Obama's support, has supplied Israel with financial aid for its Iron Dome system, which worked well in the war with Hamas in Gaza last year, but which will not suffice in the face of Hezbollah's tens of thousands of rockets and missiles. The United States can significantly augment Israel's missile defense capabilities, as well as work with it to improve its anti-mortar capabilities. American offensive help to Israel can begin with offering Israel MOPs and the spare B-52s that can deliver them. B-52s could also help Israel in a war with Hezbollah, which would surely be part of any conflict it has with Iran. Serious thought must be given to how else best to boost Israel's defensive and offensive capabilities, and to do so in a manner dramatic enough to signal Iran, as well as others, that we will stand by Israel.

Britain required a new leader, Winston Churchill, in 1940 to finally address the Nazi cancer. The United States needs a new leader as well, a Republican with a firm understanding of America's role in the world and the steel to pursue our interests properly and relentlessly. Still, rearmament helped provide the tools when Britain regained its will. When we have an American leader willing to restore America's place in the world and actually prevent a nuclear Iran, that president too must have the tools—as must the Israelis—to do the job.

—Michael Makovsky

Can Biden Defeat Her?

The party hasn't decided yet.

BY JAY COST

By most accounts, Joe Biden is very close to running for president. His entry would shake up the Democratic race. But could he possibly defeat Hillary Clinton?

It would be hard. Clinton has the backing of most of the Democratic party establishment. According to *FiveThirtyEight*, Clinton has been endorsed by over 100 House Democrats, 30 Senate Democrats, and 8 Democratic governors. This is an impressive showing, outpacing the establishment support that many previous nominees had obtained by this point in the cycle.

According to *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform*, that establishment support could be decisive. Written by Marty Cohen, David Carol, Hans Noel, and John Zaller, *The Party Decides* is an impressive scholarly study that has broken out of political science circles to influence a broad range of pundits, politicos, and intellectuals. The authors argue that, even in the era of open nominations—when voters in primaries and caucuses seemingly select their party's nominee—party elites still determine who wins the nomination. They typically come together around a single candidate and swing the nomination to him against an array of insurgents.

While *The Party Decides* is a great book, it suffers from the same limitation as almost all scholarship on political parties: a dearth of data. The parties are public-private institutions that do not have to disclose most of their internal doings. So political scientists struggle to confirm hypotheses about the parties. This is one reason *The Party Decides* relies heavily on politicians' endorsements of candidates to test its theory. While they have little direct influence on voters, endorsements can indicate whether the party elites are coalescing around a candidate, bringing with them their donor networks, strategists, and public credibility. Unfortunately, more direct evidence of such coordination is impossible to acquire because these party decisions are secret.

Even so, the theory is more or less sound. The consensus choice of the political class is virtually guaranteed to win the nomination. While insurgents may make the early contests interesting, they typically cannot overcome the party itself. Sooner or later, the establishment candidate wins. This is great news for Clinton.

For at least three related reasons, however, the theory may not apply in 2016.

The first is that not all insurgents are created equal: Joe Biden is no Dennis Kucinich. He is the sitting vice president of the United States, which implies access to fundraising networks, campaign talent, and other resources that outsider candidates simply lack. It also lends him a gravitas that hardly anybody else in the party possesses. This is important because the control of the nomination by the party elite is mediated by the party base. Strictly speaking, the voters do indeed determine the nominees under the current system, and the party cannot dictate terms to

DAVE MALAN

Jay Cost is a staff writer at The Weekly Standard *and the author of* A Republic No More: Big Government and the Rise of American Political Corruption.

them. Instead, the elites coordinate their substantial resources to boost their preferred candidate, thus making victory prohibitively difficult for outsiders. Because of his position in the party, Biden should be able to raise enough cash on his own to compete at least in the early states, despite the preponderance of elites going for Clinton. He also has the name recognition and credibility to prompt a close look from Democratic voters.

Historically speaking, vice presidents who run for the White House rarely lose the nomination. In the postwar era, seven sitting or former vice presidents have run for the nomination: Alben Barkley, Richard Nixon, Hubert Humphrey, Walter Mondale, George H.W. Bush, Dan Quayle, and Al Gore. Only Barkley and Quayle failed to secure it. The reason is simple: The office of vice president has a lot of heft. It probably is not enough to overcome the establishment support Clinton enjoys, but the prospect cannot be dismissed out of hand.

Second, the party establishment's control over the nomination is not a political suicide pact. Granted, Clinton has done a fantastic job of corralling party support early on, but she won't necessarily hold it over time. The party elites want above all to win, which means Clinton must eventually stop her slide in the general election polls. She already appears to have lost her lead against some of her Republican opponents, and she must remain in striking distance of them. If she cannot do that, look for the party establishment to reevaluate its support, especially if Biden is running stronger in head-to-head matchups against the GOP. It is here that heavy reliance on endorsement data might paint a false picture: The party establishment might start to break away from Clinton behind the scenes before anyone publicly revoked a single endorsement.

Third, there is one person whose support matters substantially more than anybody else's: Barack Obama. If Obama decides that Clinton cannot win, or if he thinks Biden can win and would be a better steward of his legacy, that could be hugely consequential. Obama is the only politician in the Democratic party with a network of donors and strategists bigger than Clinton's. He also has enormous sway over Democratic voters, especially African Americans. If he mobilized his campaign apparatus on behalf of Biden, that could make all the difference. And if he were to endorse Biden, even by a wink and a nod, that would be a game-changer.

Indeed, the power of a sitting president must not be underestimated, especially one like Obama who retains sky-high approval and favorable ratings from his party's base. It might not be an overstatement to say that in 2016, it will be less the party than the president who decides. If Obama remains on the sidelines, that will be a boon for Clinton. If he mobilizes his campaign network against her, that will mean big trouble. If he appeals to voters on Biden's behalf, that will be disastrous.

At present, the least we can say is that—all else being equal—Clinton is the heavy favorite to win the nomination, even against Biden. The catch is that, this time around, all else might not be equal. ♦

Everyone Gets Everything Wrong

The surprising 2016 race.

BY FRED BARNES

Nearly everything that was expected to happen in the 2016 presidential race hasn't, and many things that weren't expected have. The rise of Donald Trump—even that he would run—was not predicted. Nor was the fall of Scott Walker or the weakness of Jeb Bush's candidacy. Polls have proved to be unreliable indicators of where the Republican and Democratic campaigns are headed. Hillary Clinton's coronation as Democratic nominee, we were told, was a sure thing. Now she's sliding toward underdog status.

Politics isn't science. Polls measure where things stand at a moment in time. But politics is dynamic. In the pre-primary year—that is, now—voters are fickle. My one rule of politics is that the future is never a straight-line projection of the present. And it hasn't been this year.

The biggest change is the revolt of angry conservatives, who make up a large chunk of the GOP base. After Republicans captured the Senate in the 2014 election, and having controlled the House since 2010, they expected to dominate Washington. Instead, President Obama has.

The Donald: Who knew?

"You vote Republican and nothing happens," says consultant Jeffrey Bell. "It's driving the base crazy."

When Trump began attacking illegal immigrants and establishment

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NEWSCOM

Republicans, the base rallied to his side. Practically no one expected this. I didn't. When Trump said John McCain wasn't a hero, the conventional wisdom was that his campaign would crash. It didn't. Then it was predicted he would soon fade. He hasn't. On the contrary, Trump continues to draw huge, enthusiastic crowds and was the central figure in the two nationally televised GOP debates.

Trump specializes in acting in ways usually thought of as unpresidential. He targets his Republican foes with crude insults. Almost everything he says is politically incorrect. But this style has worked, at least for him. Who knew? The angry right shows no sign of abandoning him.

Trump may not have played a direct role in the decisions of Scott Walker and Rick Perry to drop out of the race. But it's hard to imagine they would have quit if he were not gobbling up most of the media attention. Perry suffered from failing to qualify for the top-tier debates. Why? Trump kept him from getting the conservative backing he needed. GOP voters viewed Perry favorably by 2-to-1, but that didn't translate into actual support, says Jeff Miller, Perry's campaign manager.

"Trump hurt us," says Miller. Perry "needed to get in the first debate to show he's electable." Absent that, his fundraising dried up.

A widely accepted notion has been that super-PACs would take up the slack for a candidate with money woes. Now we know that's a myth. Walker's main super-PAC had over $20 million in the bank when he quit. It turns out operating funds raised by the candidate are as important as ever in presidential races. Perry's super-PAC had millions on hand, and a donor has asked for a $5 million refund, according to *Politico*.

One problem with political reporting and prognosticating is they're often backward looking. It's assumed what happened in the past will happen again. Take governors. Unlike senators, who mainly talk, or candidates with no record in elected office, governors have governed. They've been chief executives. This gives them a tangible qualification to be president, one voters have acknowledged by electing governors to the White House in seven out of the past nine elections.

This year is different. The preference for governors—a perfectly rational preference—has died. Two governors, both with impressive records, are gone, and three others are struggling to stay alive. Jeb Bush, while underperforming, appears to be viable, Chris Christie and Mike Huckabee barely so. Bobby Jindal hasn't clicked.

The biggest contradiction of expectations among Democrats is Hillary Clinton. Look back at all those stories six months to a year ago about the certainty of her being the nominee and you'll wonder why in the world anyone believed that. They were based on polls and her strong, though losing, campaign in 2008. But back when those stories were written she had a single, weak opponent, Martin O'Malley. Others were likely to join the race.

It's true the email scandal couldn't have been predicted. Nor could her dreadful performance as a candidate. She has become peevish, media-phobic, and, in Yuval Levin's description, "authentically inauthentic." That her and her husband's greed in demanding hundreds of thousands of dollars for speeches would emerge as an issue wasn't clear either.

But a coronation? Was she so loved that no conceivable candidate had a chance against her? That's not how primaries work. If a frontrunner lacks a credible challenger, the media will create one, as they did with Gary Hart in 1984. Also, the Democratic party has moved to the left since 2008, and Clinton had to adjust to that. She has, clumsily, but not before Senator Bernie Sanders entered the race and captured much of the Democratic left.

We're four months away from the first contest in Iowa, plenty of time for Trump to wear out his welcome. The other intruders from outside politics—Ben Carson and Carly Fiorina—may vanish. Clinton could, theoretically, emerge in a sympathetic light. But if any of that happens, I'll be surprised. ♦

She Said *What?*

Ann Coulter, twit.

BY P.J. O'ROURKE

Toward Ann Coulter I had always taken a "suffer little children to come unto me" attitude. Not that she ever came on to me or anything. It's just that she's a kid. She was born in 1961. I've got skinny Brooks Brothers neckties in the back of my closet older than that.

Ann Coulter grew up during the "I-was-conservative-after-conservatism-was-cool" era, helping found the *Cornell Review* in the early 1980s. She's noisy and she gives me a headache. But kids are, and kids do. I have several.

She's from Connecticut and is very upset about immigrants. I am willing to lend a sympathetic ear to people from Connecticut who are very upset about immigrants, if they have a tribal casino.

And I forgive her for supporting Donald Trump. Kids do that stuff. My 17-year-old daughter has wheedled the car keys and right now is out probably behaving at least as stupidly.

Other than that I've been, I suppose, to the extent I've paid attention, on the same political page as Ann Coulter. Well, in the same political book, several chapters further on, under the subhead "Grumpy Old Farts and the Libertarian/Neocon Conundrum."

Then, during the September 16 Republican presidential candidates' debate, Ann Coulter twittered or tweeted or whatever the verb form of that waste of time may be.

She is young, scatter-brained, and heedless, but she is not an idiot. She graduated *cum laude* from Cornell and has a J.D. from the University of Michigan Law School. But no intelligent hike through the Minotaur's labyrinth of politics can be made in 140-character baby steps. Especially when you're walking in clown shoes.

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What Ann Coulter tweeted was:

> Cruz, Huckabee Rubio all mentioned ISRAEL in their response to: "What will AMERICA look like after you are president."

And

> How many f—ing Jews do these people think there are in the United States?

Not anywhere near as many as there would and should be if FDR hadn't been as much of a jerk about immigration as you are, Ann, you etiolated bean sprout butt trumpet.

As to why Israel is important, to paraphrase John F. Kennedy, "Today, in the world of freedom, the proudest boast is '*Ikh bin a Ishral*.'"

And I mean it, even if, pope-kissing Mick that I am, my Yiddish is maybe sketchy.

Partly this is personal, Ann, you jangle-tongue, you all-clapper and-no-carillon, you crack in the Liberty Bell. To paraphrase Jerry Seinfeld, "It's not me, it's you."

But, first, my contempt is moral. Antisemitism is evil. *Per se*, as you lawyers like to put it. For the sake of argument, let us "stipulate" that you are not *per se* an antisemite. Instead of saying that's true, let us *stipulate* it with all the snarky lawyer freight that "stipulating" carries.

Being so stipulated, you are damn rude. One does not say, "f—ing Jews." One does not say "f—ing blacks" or "f—ing Latinos" or even "f—ing relentlessly self-promoting Presbyterian white women from New Canaan."

THOMAS FLUHARTY

Manners are the small change of morality. You, Ann, are nickel and diming yourself. And may all the coins in Scrooge McDuck's money bin land on you and squash you flat. (Scrooge, by the way, is not a Jew, he's a duck.)

Second, my contempt is religious. The Jews found our God, hiding in plain sight, while the rest of us were praying to "a rag and a bone and a hank of hair."

And what thanks do the Jews get? They get this wisecrack from William Norman Ewer, early-20th-century Brit journalist (and Commie):

How odd of God
To choose the Jews.

To which there's an anonymous capping reply that I would like to second:

Not odd, you sod
The Jews chose God.

Third, it's political. There *is* a vein of antisemitism in conservatism. You're mining it. I trust the claim you've staked will pan out with you getting a smack in the pan.

Antisemitism is almost an original sin of "classical liberalism." It is present at the birth of the Enlightenment, with Voltaire who, in his *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, under the entry for *Tolerance*, of all places, calls Jews "the most intolerant and cruel nation of all antiquity." Voltaire! Even he who all but invented liberty and saved us from that ur-leftist fool Rousseau.

And 200 years later it was still there. In the effort to expel antisemites from conservatism, William F. Buckley Jr. had to pause in his war against collectivism's barbarian hordes and sever ties with the man he had endorsed for president, Pat Buchanan, and stifle his old friend and *National Review* senior editor Joe Sobran. (Joe, whom you, Ann, have called "the G.K. Chesterton of our time"—a two-edged compliment in this context, viz. Chesterton's

essay "The Problem of Zionism.")

In between Voltaire and Sobran there were all the *entre-deux-guerres* conservatives willing to tolerate or even endorse the cancerous sores of fascism as a sort of homeopathic remedy for the leprosy of Bolshevism.

And, finally, Ann, it really is personal. I owe my life as something other than a complete nebbish to Jews. I didn't grow up in New Canaan, Connecticut, and I don't know if there was a "gentleman's agreement" at the Round Hill Country Club. I grew up in Toledo, Ohio, and I didn't know anything about country clubs.

When I was growing up, Toledo was a factory town, a magnet for the immigrants you deplore (both foreign and from Kentucky). My neighborhood was peopled by Krauts, Poles, Hunkies, Bohunks, shanty Irish, Jews, and white trash, with a sprinkling of WASPs, mostly fresh off the farm. (The Lebanese were up on the North Side. For some reason Toledo didn't have many Italians. And—this was before you were born—blacks and Latinos had not been discovered, socially.)

The Protestant German kids in my hometown were good in school but dorky about it, with Monday's homework done on Friday night. The Catholic German kids were somewhat the same but less so, classic B students, and ditto for the farm boys except they had a blank look on their faces and clothes from the Montgomery Ward catalogue.

There were smart Micks and Polacks, but they kept their heads down about it because they grew up in households where "Don't get smart with me!" and "What makes you think you're so smart?" were parenting terms of art and often accompanied by a whack from Dad.

And the white trash, jeez were they stupid. They were out in the high school parking lot *practicing* to be stupid, quizzing each other on it. "Hell, no, Bubba, that ain't the way you say it. It's, 'Hold ma beer, y'all, an' watch *this*!'"

The Jewish kids were the only kids who considered it *cool* to be smart. And so did their parents.

I was raised in a house without smart. My mother may once have had a life of the mind, to judge by the dusty copies of *Kitty Foyle* by Christopher Morley, *Saratoga Trunk* by Edna Ferber, and *It Can't Happen Here* by Sinclair Lewis on the underpopulated shelves of the bookcase in the front hall. But being widowed, raising kids, marrying a drunk second husband, and having cancer distracted her.

One night at the dinner table, when I was about 13, my stepfather called me a skinny little smartass show-off for asking what Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* was about. Of course I *was* showing off. What it's about is self-evident. I was smugly savoring the fact that I was the only person in the family who knew the title and author (if nothing else) of such a tome.

But I bet the conversation wouldn't have gone that way at my friend Barry Cantor's house. There would have been a discussion. Perhaps with a tactful elision of how it was all the Christians' fault. Or at least somebody would have looked up Gibbon in the *World Book Encyclopedia*. The Cantors owned the complete set.

The bell curve being what the bell curve is, and applying, as it does, uniformly to the human race (including lawyers who went to Cornell), some Jews weren't smart. For example, my drug dealer pal Louie Schlotsky with the mobbed-up dad. Louie died of a heroin overdose in the 1970s. Or my buddy Steve Plummerberg, son of a brain surgeon. Steve joined the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi cult.

But at least Louie and Steve *tried* to be smart. And thank God—specifically YHWH—for the few, the very few, the chosen if you will, people in Toledo who tried. Who tried to cheer the Freedom Riders, tried to debate the ideas of Herman Kahn, tried to get to Chicago to see Lenny Bruce at the Gate of Horn, tried to read Herbert Marcuse *and* Eric Hoffer, and tried to dig Thelonious Monk.

Ann, I understand you're a fan of Phish. ♦

Bacha Bazi and the Afghan Drawdown

See no evil, hear no evil.

BY AARON MACLEAN

The recent outrage over reports of systematic child rape by Afghan security forces may be justified, but sadly there is little novelty to the reports themselves. Even the Sunday *New York Times* article that brought the matter into public view cited a list of earlier dispatches addressing it: articles in the *Times* itself in 2002 and 2011, as well as a 2010 *Frontline* documentary, "The Dancing Boys of Afghanistan," that explored at length the pedophilic practice of *bacha bazi*—the keeping of boys by Pashtun men for sex. A 2013 *Vice* documentary, *This Is What Winning Looks Like*, also examined the issue, with a focus on how U.S. Marines were struggling to stop such exploitation by Afghan police commanders in Helmand Province, largely without success.

What did seem new about the *Times* report was its claim that soldiers and Marines had been told to look the other way when confronted with the rape of children more or less in their midst. In one of two harrowing cases discussed by the reporter, a Marine, Lance Corporal Gregory

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Buckley Jr., told his father in a telephone conversation that he could hear the screams of the victims at night, two weeks before being shot to death in 2012 by one such victim in a so-called insider attack. The father is now suing the Marine Corps. In the second case, an Army Special Forces officer, Capt. Dan Quinn, was relieved of command after throwing to the ground a militia commander who had kept a local boy chained to his bed. Quinn has since left the Army, which is still pursuing disciplinary action against a second soldier involved in the incident, Sgt. First Class Charles Martland.

It is reasonable to question what on earth has happened to the moral compass of commanders who, upon hearing that one of their officers has used physical force against an Afghan commander who is raping young boys, chooses to discipline the officer—whose moral instincts, at least, seem beyond reproach. It is also reasonable to question whether or not these two cases prove the existence of an unspoken but consistent military policy of noninterference, as the *Times* article suggests.

The Pentagon responded by firmly rejecting that suggestion, and the commander of American troops in Afghanistan, Gen. John Campbell, released a statement on September 22 in which he claimed, "I personally have served multiple tours of duty in Afghanistan and am absolutely confident that no such theater policy has ever existed here, and certainly, no such policy has existed throughout my tenure as commander."

There was, indeed, no such policy in 2009 and 2010 when I served in Afghanistan as a Marine. We received no guidance or training—official or otherwise—dealing with the matter. We were aware of the fact that Pashtuns often had sex with younger men, but never encountered the kidnapping and rape of local boys that others have reported, probably because we were working primarily with the Afghan National Army—an organization dominated by northerners and non-Pashtuns and, by Afghan standards, a more professional outfit than the local police units that became critical to the success of the U.S. drawdown beginning in 2011. Though the Afghan Army has its problems, including corruption and surely sexual assault as well, lost in the discussion this week is a fine but important distinction: The crisis of systematic child rape primarily involves Pashtuns who have joined the police or government-backed militias in the eastern and southern parts of the country during the period when Americans have been focused on their own departure.

Faced with the prevalence of *bacha bazi* and an absence of guidance from above, adviser units working with the police and militias largely had to make up their own minds about what to do. Ben Anderson, the journalist who made the 2013 *Vice* documentary, told me in an interview that what Lance Corporal Buckley said to his father about hearing the screams of victims at night was something he himself had experienced on roughly two-thirds of the patrol bases he had stayed on while reporting on the Afghan security forces. The Marines he followed in Helmand for *This Is What Winning Looks Like* are filmed making repeated efforts to deal with the problem after receiving news that three boys kept as sex slaves have been shot by the police. They report what they are dealing with to their chain of command, where the grim news is suppressed by midlevel commanders working to put a positive spin on the progress of the drawdown.

"If you are an ambitious officer you accentuate the positive and minimize the negative," Anderson says of the disconnect he witnessed between the grim reality in Helmand, where the police were at least as feared by the locals as the Taliban, and rosy reports sent to Kabul and beyond.

Among the more disturbing aspects of the situation is the conclusion reportedly reached by at least some service members and commanders that, since what they were dealing with seemed to be a cultural issue, there was not only little they could do about it, but little they *should* do about it.

Michael Skerker, a professor in the Leadership, Ethics, and Law Department at the U.S. Naval Academy, pointed out the condescension behind such an assumption. "Is this really the local culture?" he said in an interview. "Are parents giving their children, selling their children, encouraging them to have sex with adults? Or is it criminal in Pashtun culture?"

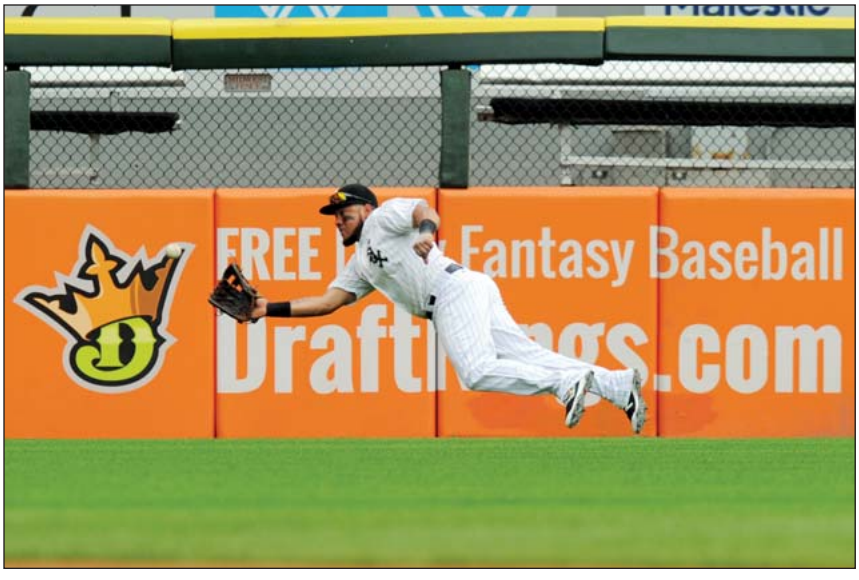
Indeed, like tax evasion or drug use in the United States, there can be behavior that is both widespread and widely known to be wrong. The fact that the Pashtun-dominated Taliban have long used reports of rapes committed by government agents as a recruiting tool—indeed, among the elements of Mullah Omar's rise to power was his reputation for taking violent action against those who kidnapped and raped children—indicates that Pashtun parents, like parents everywhere, disapprove of seeing their children raped.

Referring to the dilemmas that American advisers found themselves facing, Skerker said, "Afghanistan is where all the gruesome philosophers' thought experiments are actually case studies." While it would be both unreasonable and unrealistic for American commanders to expect their troops to be knights-errant of liberal democracy, going out into the land in search of wrongdoing with a general mandate to eliminate all evil, it is nonetheless unconscionable that commanders in at least some cases felt they were supposed to tolerate systematic child rape among the Afghans they were responsible for advising.

It is not only unconscionable—it is counterproductive, as every incident only strengthens the moral position of the Taliban. But actually defeating the Taliban, as opposed to departing Afghanistan as quickly as possible, hasn't been a goal of the U.S. military or the Obama administration for years now. In the haste to get American troops out of the country, good news going up the chain of command has been smiled upon and bad news quietly deemphasized. A lot of evil has been ignored in the effort to wind down what the president once referred to as "the good war." ♦

Regulate that Fantasy

Congressman shocked, shocked to find gambling going on out there. BY GEOFFREY NORMAN



A DraftKings ad behind the Chicago White Sox's Melky Cabrera, September 7

Pick Eddie Lacy. That was the advice of at least one expert back in the summer. Not a single play of the regular NFL season had been run, but it was already a busy time for those who play fantasy football and the gurus who advise them. "Lacy's mix of stability and upside over a full season" is unmatched, the expert wrote.

In the Green Bay Packers' second game of the season, Lacy, a running back, went down with an ankle injury. Bad news for those among the millions who play fantasy football who had picked Lacy to play for their "team" and were counting on him to rack up some big yardage and score a couple of touchdowns and, thus, lead them to glory . . . or at least a serious cash payout.

Geoffrey Norman, a writer in Vermont, is a frequent contributor to The Weekly Standard.

And the Packers? Well, they put in James Starks, who ran for 95 yards, and they beat the Seattle Seahawks, 27-17. So the real team that depends on Lacy to carry the mail did okay, while lots of fantasy teams that were built around him took a hit.

An interesting anomaly. As is the fact that you can, in essence, legally bet on Lacy having a big game but not on the Packers, for whom he plays, to win. Not unless you make that bet in one of the four states where sports gambling is legal—Delaware, Montana, Nevada, and Oregon.

New Jersey is, conspicuously, not one of those states. But it is still a destination for gamblers. Which may account for this headline last week in the *Hill*: "Fantasy sports sites draw scrutiny from Washington."

The chief scrutinizer, as it happens, is Rep. Frank Pallone Jr. (D-N.J.), who "has called for congressional hearings into the topic, accusing the pro leagues and teams of hypocrisy for partnering with fantasy sites while opposing the legalization of traditional sports betting."

If the question before the House is one of "hypocrisy," then Rep. Pallone and his committee will be exceedingly busy for a long time to come. Because government is quite comfortable with hypocrisy on questions of gambling, as is well appreciated by anyone who had stood in a convenience store line for 10 or 15 minutes while people in front are buying lottery tickets with the grocery money. Lotteries are undeniably (a) games of chance and (b) government monopolies.

Even so, in 2006, the Congress of which Pallone is a member passed something called the Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act. The bill effectively shut down Internet betting operations of the sort that, had they been running during the week when Eddie Lacy twisted his ankle, you could have contacted online to put down a hundred on the Packers. Thanks to the law, the republic was spared consequences too horrible to contemplate. People might, for instance, have bet money on football games instead of on one of those state-run lotteries.

The same law, as it happens, carved out an exemption for fantasy sports. These were determined to be games of skill. Some people would be more skillful, one supposes, at divining when Eddie Lacy would roll up an ankle.

Special treatment, such as that given to fantasy sports betting, almost always proves (redundantly) the near-infallibility of another law—the one about unintended consequences. In this case, the law helped create a multibillion-dollar gambling industry out of something that had once been a sort of idiosyncratic fringe passion, indulged in by people who just could not get enough sports. The fantasy leagues provided them with an outlet that justified their obsession with, among other things, sports statistics.

Into the opening provided by the legislative exemption rolled huge fantasy businesses backed by investors like Fox, NBC Sports, and Turner Sports.

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Robert Kraft, owner of the New England Patriots, is an investor in DraftKings, one of the two big players in the business. The other is FanDuel. Between them, they spent $31 million on 9,000 ads during the first week of the pro football season. DraftKings plans to spend one-quarter of a billion dollars in the next three years on advertising with Fox alone.

So the fantasy websites will be to the contemporary NFL broadcast what beer and tires once were. With this difference: While Goodyear and Budweiser were trying to persuade you to spend money, DraftKings and FanDuel are telling you that if you *really* know your football, you can make money. It is, after all, a game of skill. Says so, right there in that 2006 legislation.

So the ads feature people who have, indeed, received some big paydays. And where the original, ad hoc fantasy leagues were organized among friends and colleagues and geared to an entire season, on the big sites, you can put together a new team every week, thus providing what gamblers crave above all else, including money—namely, action.

The boom in fantasy betting is self-evidently good for DraftKings and FanDuel. And for their investors. Also, in an interesting way, the NFL and the networks that broadcast the games are big winners. While it piously opposes legal sports gambling on the grounds that this might incentivize game-fixing, the NFL is fine with the big fantasy operations. The NFL is always looking for new and creative ways to push the brand and broaden its appeal. Where it once played all of its games on Sunday, in the afternoon, you can now watch a live NFL game on Thursday and Monday nights and three on Sundays if you have a basic cable package. Dish Network, and you can get them all. And if you have to be on the road, SiriusXM has the whole package for your listening pleasure.

The NFL depends on the broadcasting of these games and the widest possible viewership, and fantasy players—with rosters of stars drawn from every franchise—will tune in even to a game between two feeble, out-of-the-running teams, late in the season, to see if a certain tight end they picked up cheap can catch a few balls and maybe score a touchdown, earning them enough money to at least cover their costs for the week.

The broadcasters are beneficiaries for the same reason. And then there are things like the NFL's own cable channel with its *RedZone*, which broadcasts only those plays inside a defender's 20-yard line. Sort of like a baseball show that gives you only those pitches when there are men on base and the count is full. What kind of "fan" is interested in that?

AP / WAYNE PARRY

Frank Pallone Jr. addresses the press regarding legalizing sports betting, January 23, 2012.

There are, too, websites devoted to fantasy football that deliver closely argued and thoroughly documented advice on why, say, Eli Manning is the hot quarterback this week. Or Adrian Peterson can be depended upon to have a blowout game. One studies the advice and wonders why, if the writer is so certain, he is sharing. Why not keep it to himself, and bet the mortgage money? When you go to the horse track, there are people selling tout sheets with carefully reasoned advice on why this or that nag is a drop dead cinch in the third. You don't see them at the betting window. The people who write books about how to beat the casinos at blackjack are counting on royalties, not counting cards.

But this is a matter of human nature. Lots of people like to gamble, and some people are able to make money gambling, but the surer path is to make money off the gamblers. Like they used to say, "In the winter, the bookies go to Florida and the players eat snowballs." Robert Kraft, who invests in DraftKings, probably doesn't have a fantasy team. He owns the Patriots, and his quarterback, every week, is Tom Brady.

Fantasy football, like the other fantasy sports games, is here to stay. Call it a "game of skill" if you like, but it is still gambling, and this is distressing to people who worry about the easy descent from playing for fun to playing compulsively; from thinking of your fantasy betting as a pastime to considering it your job. As Steven Malanga writes in *City Journal*:

> Websites like DraftKings and FanDuel have benefited from the widespread perception that betting on fantasy sports isn't gambling. Unlike casinos and state lotteries, fantasy sites carry no warnings about gambling addiction. Parents, spouses, and friends of players may be slow to recognize the signs of compulsive gambling because they believe fantasy sports are a harmless diversion. The imprimatur of the professional leagues, sports broadcasters, and athletes will only further encourage that notion.

If so, we can expect an eventual flood of public service ads, counseling fantasy players on the dangers of gambling addiction. Just like those that advise the people who buy state lottery tickets to "play responsibly."

Meanwhile, Representative Pallone and his colleagues may or may not make any headway against the hypocrisy that surrounds the issue of gambling in our society.

I'm taking the NFL and the fantasy leagues and laying the points. ♦

Social Justice *Mikado*

The pooh-bahs of political correctness prevail.

BY WALTER OLSON

Chorus: *Behold the Social Justice Warrior!*
A personage of noble rank and title
A humor-free yet potent officer.
Whose functions are particularly vital!
Defer, defer to the Social Justice Warrior!

News item: New York Gilbert & Sullivan Players has scrapped a production of *The Mikado* after criticism of its exaggerated depictions of Japanese characters and its use of, to quote *Playbill*, "a company of mostly Caucasian actors" to enact the operetta set in Japan. Actors' Equity, the stage performers' union, issued a statement to "commend" the cancellation: "We believe that the use of yellowface and blackface is offensive and that being 'historically correct' is not a defense for co-opting a culture or perpetuating stereotypes. Equity plans to be in the forefront as these issues are discussed and to move our industry forward."

If it surprises you that "mostly Caucasian actors" are no longer deemed suitable to perform an operetta premiered in London in 1885 that lampooned the politics of that time and place, well, to quote the Chorus, *You don't understand these things / It is simply Court etiquette*. The court etiquette in question is that of cultural appropriation, in which ideas about casting and performance that once worked to expand creative freedom (why not a black or female Hamlet?) get turned around to constrict it (how dare a white actor play Othello!).

I could say *The Mikado* is the greatest and most beloved of all operatic works in English, and that it would be a shame to lose it. *You* could retort that like the rest of Gilbert and Sullivan, it mingles its clever lyrics, glorious tunes, and still-sharp satire with outdated viewpoints and occasional hurtful attitudes. Neither of us would be wrong, exactly:

Pish-Tush (rewritten): *And I am right, and you are right; politically, we're quite correct.*

Oh, the outrage

Here's a how-de-do, though: According to a review published by the United Kingdom's Japan Society, *The Mikado* now seems to be received with amused tolerance in Japan, where a translation was a "runaway success" in 2001. Back at its time of publication it caused considerable friction, though often for reasons, such as perceived lack of proper respect toward the emperor, somewhat remote from those that vex Actors' Equity today.

But let's face it: If *The Mikado* is to survive at all, the whole thing will have to be rewritten, and to do that we need to call in the most sensitive and politically attuned among us, the Social Justice Warriors trained at American universities. *They've* got a little list:

Three Little Maids from school are we,
Privilege-checked as we can be,
Filled to the brim with outrage-ee,
Three Little Maids from school!

Victorian audiences were fascinated by the delicacy of Japanese cultural taboos governing relations between the sexes, which means *The Mikado*'s severe ban on romantic overtures can carry forward into the age of Title IX with relatively slight alteration:

So he decreed, in words succinct,
That all who flirted, leered, or winked,
Without consent-form double-inked,
Should forthwith be beheaded…

After I put out a call for lyrics online (#SJWMikado on Twitter), correspondent Corey Bean rewrote the emperor's great comic riff on retributive justice thus:

My object all sublime
I shall erase the line—
Between micro-
aggressions and crime—
Between mere offense and crime;

The Mikado proceeds to sing of innocent merriment, but that part will have to go; no such thing nowadays.

In our new callout culture, a key player is the sad or angry informant who calls out an offender. The sorrowful little bird who could only repeat one accusatory phrase again and again reminded me, of course, of Twitter:

On a branch of my tweet-stream a
tweeter sighed, "I'm
Offended, offended, offended!"
And I said to him, "why are you all of
the time
Offended, offended, offended"?
"Is it weakness of intellect, birdie?"
I cried,
"Or a sensitive trigger for blockage inside?"
With a mournful emoji he merely replied,
"Offended, offended, offended!"

NYGASP instead plans to stage a production of *The Pirates of Penzance*. So now pirate-shaming is supposed to be okay? ♦

IMAGES: NEWSCOM

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High Anxiety in the Baltics

Putin's nervous neighbors.

BY JEFFREY GEDMIN

In fall 1991, a member of the Slovenian parliament visited me at my office at the American Enterprise Institute to discuss her country's campaign to join NATO. I recall the intensity of the conversation and how odd her zeal seemed to me at that moment. The Cold War was over. Slovenia's fate as a peaceful little Switzerland hugging Austria, Italy, and the Adriatic Sea struck me as fairly assured. My guest insisted, however, that this mostly mountainous, relatively prosperous, southeastern European nation—formerly part of Communist Yugoslavia—needed an insurance policy to protect itself, should history come roaring back in the Balkans. The next spring, history returned. Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic started his war against Bosnia, and soon much of the former Yugoslavia was engulfed in flames.

A quarter-century later, in northeastern Europe, there's growing anxiety that history will grab Latvia and Lithuania by the throat again. Both have been NATO members since 2004. But they're eager for more assurance these days.

That's because Vladimir Putin has been working tirelessly to bring Russia back to its nationalistic, narcissistic glory, and the tiny Baltic states feel especially vulnerable. Both border Russia (Lithuania through the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad). Both have salient ethnic Russian populations. Both were occupied by Soviet forces and incorporated into the USSR in 1940. Moscow is clingy. This summer, the Russian chief prosecutor's office, acting at the request of members of Putin's United Russia party, announced it would examine whether the Soviet Union acted legally when it recognized Baltic independence in 1991. It sounds ominous. This is the same chief prosecutor that ruled in June that Russia's 1954 transfer of Crimea to Ukraine had been illegal.

Vladimir Putin reviews members of his Baltic Fleet, July 26.

I've been to Estonia a half-dozen times the last couple years. This trip, I've come to Lithuania and Latvia to get the lay of the land, and to participate in two conferences. The countries are studies in contrast; both find themselves increasingly in harm's way, although for different reasons.

The conference in Vilnius, Lithuania's capital, is a gathering of staunch pro-American, pro-democracy advocates organized by the Hudson Institute and a half-dozen like-minded American and European think tanks. The venue is the Presidential Palace, a building of elegant neoclassical design that dates to the 14th century and is the president's official residence. Several Russian imperial governors lived here in the 19th century, notably Mikhail Muravyov, a fervent nationalist and merciless ruler dubbed by his subjects "the hangman of Vilnius." Muravyov didn't care much for local Lithuanian or Polish identity. "What Russian rifles did not succeed in doing will be finished off by Russian schools," he observed.

It's not hard to see how the new Russian belligerence reaches deep Lithuanian wounds. The words of Georgia's 42-year-old defense minister Tina Khidasheli resonate strongly with conference participants. She tells us that when Russia invaded Georgia seven years ago, it was clear Ukraine would be next. Putin is reincorporating as much of the Soviet empire as he can. Khidasheli has come to Lithuania to urge vigilance and an end to wishful thinking about Russia. Georgians know something about Russian designs. To this day, their South Ossetia and Abkhazia provinces remain occupied by Russian forces. It's astonishing how well Vladimir Putin smells weakness and lives by the adage "What's mine is mine—and what's yours is mine." Moscow has violated the EU's six-point peace plan in Georgia since the start. This summer, Russian soldiers brazenly moved border demarcations, gobbling up further bits of Georgian territory. "I went to bed in Georgia, and woke up in South Ossetia," said one startled farmer.

It's little consolation for the Lithuanians here when Andrei Illarionov, a former Putin adviser now at the Cato Institute, tells the assembly that a conventional military assault by Russia on Lithuanian territory is unlikely—although "not to be ruled out entirely either."

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The Vilnius meeting is a "shout-out," says Charles Davidson, one of its principal organizers and founder/executive director of the Hudson Institute's Kleptocracy Initiative. This is a gathering of the converted, designed to inspire the faithful. A young representative of a Swedish NGO sounds like a hardened Washington neocon when she issues an impassioned plea for the West to stop falling for Putin's lies. Frail former Lithuanian president Vytautas Landsbergis, who lived through Nazism and communism in his eight-and-a-half decades, is worried about NATO's resolve. He strikes melancholy notes, saying he's glad he will likely be gone before his country's next, coming conflict with Russia.

Lithuania worries about a spectrum of threats and does not rule out Russia's use of military force. A senior Lithuanian analyst tells me one scenario has Russia staging an attack on a train en route from the Russian Federation to Kaliningrad as pretext for intervention. Sound farfetched? The Shelling of Mainila on November 26, 1939, was a false flag operation in which Red Army forces fired on a Russian village, claiming that the assault originated from Finland. The Soviet Union used the alleged attack as pretext to launch its Winter War four days later. Does anyone seriously believe that Russia's KGB president is beyond such tricks, if he sees a chance to test NATO's Article Five? Kaliningrad matters to Moscow. Its governor has warned of a Western-instigated soft revolution.

In Latvia, the atmosphere is different. Here we convene at the beach resort of Jurmala, 15 miles west of Riga, the capital, in a hotel once owned by the Soviet interior ministry (apparently even the KGB needed a little sun and fun). Soviet leaders Leonid Brezhnev and Nikita Khrushchev were fond of coming here. Today, Jurmala is a popular hangout for Russia's super-wealthy. The conference, a roundtable of about 40—roughly half the size of the Vilnius meeting—is hosted by Latvia's Harmony party. Founded in 2010 from a merger of three center-left parties, Harmony is Latvia's leading opposition party and seeks to represent the country's Russian-speaking population. Party chairman Nils Usakovs is an ethnic Russian and mayor of Riga. Thirty percent of Latvia's population is ethnically Russian. In Riga, around half the city speaks Russian as a first language.

I admit, I expected open hostility (I was one of only three Americans present). Instead, the daylong discussion comprises—with the exception of a Chinese professor who banged on about American hegemony—speaker after speaker moored in moral equivalence, focusing on what they see as the need for a constructive new Ostpolitik.

The former foreign minister of a small Western European nation pleads for rationality, volunteering that his country "could speak to Putin." A former Scandinavian ambassador to Latvia calls for "confidence-building measures" between NATO and Russia and a return to arms control and disarmament. It's time that both sides "stop pressuring each other," the ex-diplomat insists.

"Both sides need to compromise on Ukraine" is the constant refrain. There are calls for "peaceful coexistence" and the "reconstruction of a European dialogue" with Russia. One Moscow participant throws us Americans a small and crooked bone, saying it is not the United States that created turmoil in Ukraine—but rather Russia's "younger brother" itself. That's part of the Russian narrative, of course. When the Kremlin's not blaming Washington for having been behind a soft revolution in Kiev, it's pushing the idea that incompetent Ukrainian politicians and a growing neo-Nazi movement left Russia no choice but to intervene. As best I can tell, there are no Ukrainians of any stripe in the room (the roundtable was open to a small audience).

Mayor Usakovs, a 39-year-old former television personality and journalist, joins for a session. He's smooth and relaxed. His mantra as party chairman has been an appeal to move beyond ethnic politics. Speaking in his native Russian, Usakovs talks about a "troublesome time," deplores the bloodshed in Ukraine, but quickly proceeds to argue that none of this can impede "the construction of a stable Europe." Detente always put stability first, no matter how vicious and menacing that stability could be.

In press interviews, Usakovs likes to maintain that both he and Harmony are Latvians first, patriotic beyond reproach. It's not an easy sell. Harmony has enjoyed a cooperation agreement with Vladimir Putin's United Russia party for nearly a half-dozen years. It was in this spirit of fraternal relations that Usakovs declined to condemn Russia's annexation of Crimea.

Latvia has a Russia problem, at home and abroad. Two-thirds of ethnic Latvians see Russia as a threat, and the greatest fear is Putin's influence through the back door of Harmony and the country's large ethnic Russian population. A majority of ethnic Russians may be fence sitters, like most of those at the Jurmala conference, convinced there are two sides to the story and plenty of blame to share among America, NATO, and Russia for current tensions. That's hardly good news. But serious trouble may be brewing. FSB (the renamed KGB) presence is increasing, as it has been throughout the Baltics the last several years. Russian money is flowing into businesses and organized crime, into the pockets of politicians and the media. And Moscow never misses an opportunity to criticize the Latvian government for alleged human rights violations of ethnic Russians. Latvian officials estimate that as many as 5-8 percent of the country's Russians are now radicalized. Viktor Gushchin, an ethnic Russian historian, calls Latvia a "xenophobic and Russophobic state built on Nazi principles." Such rhetoric sounds eerily similar to the language Moscow used in justifying its intervention in Ukraine.

In the Balkans, Slobodan Milosevic stirred the pot with Serbs in Bosnia and Croatia till the pot boiled over. Putin need not bring matters so far in Latvia. The emasculation and Finlandization of a NATO member might be enough. It's time for NATO to lean in, with plenty of hard and soft power—before it's too late. ♦

The Cocked Fist Culture

Crossing the microaggressions minefield

By Matt Labash

Seattle

Don't take this the wrong way, but are you offended? I know I haven't said anything yet, but it's never too early to be aggrieved. Studies I've invented, since we're all entitled to our own facts these days, show that 4 out of 10 Americans are offended by something at all times. Ten out of 10, if they're taking a course containing the word "intersectional" at Swarthmore.

Many of us who came of age on a college campus in the early nineties mistakenly believed that full-throttle political correctness was too insidious, not to mention too exhausting, to follow us into the new century. Person, were we wrong. See what had to be done there? Under the new rules, I had to insert "person," a non-binary, gender-neutral noun, so as not to offend people with the expression "man," the preferred signifier of oppression of a white heteronormative cis-male member of the Kyriarchy. (I only understood about half that sentence myself, but I'm assured that everything in it is bad.)

'Hot button' pins with possibly 'microaggressive' messages

Like New Kids on the Block or high-waisted shorts—other '90s relics we'd left for dead that didn't quite stay that way—political correctness is back with murder in its eyes. In our newly minted Cocked Fist Culture, the question when confronting nearly anything—a book, a film, an overheard comment on a Privilege Walk—is "Is this problematic?" Though it would save time to simply ask, "What isn't?"

So problematic have the problem-miners become that my former colleague Sonny Bunch, now of the *Washington Free Beacon*, launched his own "Everything's A Problem" Tumblr. Written in the scolding voice of the problem-miners themselves, each news item/outrage-du-jour arrives pre-satirized. The blog is only six months old, and was supposed to be a toss-off hobby. Yet Bunch has cranked out 142 posts, so many that I find it problematic keeping up with them. For as advertised, everything is problematic: from Caitlyn Jenner being called attractive ("We've smuggled in the same old cis/Eurocentric narratives about womanhood," huffed the *HuffPost*'s Marc Lamont Hill) to *New Yorker* cartoons (94.7 of their characters are white, according to the Proceedings of the Natural Institute of Science, it now being considered essential to count such things).

The Cocked Fist Culture has turned into an ouroboros, except the snake is well past swallowing its own tail. It's eaten its way clean up to mid-sternum. Recent books across the political spectrum have extensively documented this turn, notably Mary Katharine Ham and Guy Benson's *End of Discussion* on the right and Kirsten Powers's *The Silencing: How the Left Is Killing Free Speech* on the center-left. Though the outrage industrial complex shows no sign of shrinking, some thought a high-water mark had been reached earlier this year when Jonathan Chait, a *New York* writer and reliable liberal, broke ranks, accusing his own team of ideological repression through all the thought-and-speech policing. He charged that the hijacked left had adopted the modus operandi of old-line smash-mouth Marxists, who've always been contemptuous of mainstream liberalism's tendency to enshrine dissent. The present left merely swaps Marxist preoccupation with economics for race-and-gender-identity fetishization.

While some on the right gave Chait a swat for sniffily arriving a quarter-century late to the anti-p.c. party, his comrades lined up to steamroll him. Amanda Taub, *Vox*'s self-described "senior sadness correspondent," responded that there's no such thing as political correctness. Even using the term is just a way "to dismiss a concern or demand as a frivolous grievance rather than a real issue," a device "often used by those in a position of privilege to

ALL IMAGES: MATT LABASH / THE WEEKLY STANDARD

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silence debates raised by marginalized people." A sentence that sounded suspiciously like it had been written by a political-correctness meme generator. The kind that Orwell described as prose consisting "less and less of words chosen for the sake of their meaning, and more and more of phrases tacked together like the sections of a prefabricated hen-house."

But the senior sadness correspondent must've grown even sadder when several months later, *Vox* itself ran a piece by a professor bylined Edward Schlosser. He complained of students' claiming grievous harm over every imagined affront. Of his and his colleagues' having to adjust their teaching materials so as not to trample the fragile buttercups, for fear of losing their jobs. Of being afraid to teach the likes of Upton Sinclair and Mark Twain at the risk of triggering sensibility-offending IEDs. Of cultural studies and social-justice writers enabling these attitudes in popular media by attempting to make complex fields of study as easily digestible as a TGIF sitcom, which has "led to an adoption of a totalizing, simplistic, unworkable, and ultimately stifling conception of social justice."

The piece's headline, incidentally, was "I'm a liberal professor, and my liberal students terrify me." One is tempted to reply to Professor Schlosser (not his real name, he was too afraid to use it): How do you think the rest of us feel? Especially as the students being taught—if "teaching" is actually what happens in the trigger-warned, hermetically sealed safe spaces that higher-education classrooms have become—move into the workforce. There, they can further the debate, which no longer remotely resembles a debate, since a debate is something too unsafe-spacey to have. Perhaps one will even do so as the "race and identity editor" at *Vox*, a newly advertised position that I'm unfortunately not making up.

Of all the spirited new events in the Oppression Olympics—rescinding commencement-address invitations to speakers whose politics you dislike, accosting presidential candidates to see if they correctly answer which-colored lives matter, etc.—there is none so perplexing as that of "microaggression," an indignity so microscopic that you'd have to be a critical race theorist, MSNBC pundit, or college sophomore even to detect it.

If your Internet service has been down for the last two years, chances are good you're unfamiliar with microaggressions. But they've gained currency so quickly that the word was recently added to Dictionary.com, along with other new essentials like "slacktivism" and "bigender." The site defines microaggression as "a subtle but offensive comment or action directed at a minority or other non-dominant group that is often unintentional or unconsciously reinforces a stereotype." As an example, Dictionary.com provides: "I don't see you as black." Fair enough. A white person saying that to a black person would at the very least be considered rude or condescending, if not a bank-shot racist. But what constitutes a microaggression is open to both wide and wild interpretation, as we will shortly see.

Microaggression scholars (yes, there now are those) emphasize that just because an offense is subtle or perhaps not even an offense at all doesn't mean microaggression isn't serious. Offensiveness is, after all, a subjective judgment rather than an objective certainty—offense always residing in the eye of the offended. So in fact, some call microaggression "the silent killer," as in something that sneaks up on you and is cumulatively injurious. Think hypertension, or carbon monoxide, or the muffled rippers your little brother used to let in the backseat on long family car-trips. That's microaggression in a nut: the Soundless Fart of racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism (don't stop the -ism'ists now, they're on a roll), classism, ageism, looksism, speciesism, "Nesting Orientalism," and whole genera of other -isms that have not yet been discovered.

Despite microaggression's vogueishness, the term itself was coined in 1970 by Chester M. Pierce, an African-American psychiatrist and professor at Harvard Medical School. While Pierce, by some accounts, was a well-liked, genteel scholar, not given to rhetorical excess, he did manage to anticipate our present Cocked Fist Culture when writing, "Every child in America entering school at the age of five is mentally ill, because he comes to school with certain allegiances toward our founding fathers, toward our elected officials, toward a belief in a supernatural Being, toward the sovereignty of this nation as a separate entity. It's up to you teachers to make all of these sick children well by creating the international children of the future."

But microaggression didn't really take flight as a concept until decades later, when expanded upon by Derald Wing Sue, an Asian-American professor of counseling psychology at Columbia University. If there is a microaggression bible, Sue's 2010 book *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation* is it. Having pushed through all 310 punishing, repetitive pages, I can say with a clear conscience that it reads less like a seminal breakthrough in an important new field of study and more like a cry for help. In fact, it closely resembles the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, specifically, the "Paranoid Personality Disorder" section.

From the *DSM*:

> The essential feature of this disorder is a pervasive and unwarranted tendency . . . to interpret the actions of people as deliberately demeaning or threatening. Almost invariably, there is a general expectation of being exploited or harmed by others in some way. . . . The person may read hidden demeaning or threatening meanings into benign remarks or events. . . . Often these people are easily slighted and quick to react with anger or counterattack; they may bear grudges for a long time, and never forgive slights, insults or injuries. . . . They tend to avoid blame even when it is warranted. . . . They intensely and narrowly search for confirmation of their expectations, with no appreciation of the total context. Their final conclusion is usually precisely what they expected in the first place.

To be clear, Sue is correct that even in our relatively enlightened age, there are still acts of racism, sexism, and the like that are committed actively, passive-aggressively, and even out of blind ignorance, as has been the case since time's dawn. And white, heterosexual men have inarguably had an easier time of it in America, taken on average, than women or gays or minorities (blacks in particular having spent their first 245 years here in chains, then until half a century ago under Jim Crow—hardly an auspicious start). To not acknowledge that injustice existed, or that it still has some real-world carry beyond legal remediation, requires a keen capacity for denial, if not dissociative amnesia.

In Sue's hyper-paranoid world, however, there is nearly no act of everyday intercourse—what sociologist Amitai Etzioni calls "the normal sounds of human rambling"—that cannot be linked to race, gender, or sexual orientation, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost of the Cocked Fist Culture's secular liturgists.

In this hyper-paranoid world, however, there is nearly no act of everyday intercourse—what sociologist Amitai Etzioni calls 'the normal sounds of human rambling'—that cannot be linked to race, gender, or sexual orientation, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost of the Cocked Fist Culture's secular liturgists.

As if microaggressions weren't already small enough, Sue further subdivides them into microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations. To elucidate, he breaks up his cerebrum-numbing academese with helpful charts, giving examples of microaggressions and what they're really saying. Charts, which by the way, have been widely employed in college faculty training throughout the country, including at UCLA, where 80-year-old professor Val Rust was witch-hunted by irate students for, among other atrocities, asking a student to lowercase "indigenous" in her dissertation.

There are some pretty obvious microaggressions that almost anyone of good faith could agree should be no-go territory. (Telling someone, for instance, "You're a credit to your race." *Duh*.) Sue, however, provides loads of additional head-scratchers. To hear him tell it, if you, as a member of the "dominant" culture, errantly ask a Latino or Asian you take to be foreign where they were born, what you're really saying is, "You are not an American." In pre-Cocked-Fist America, we'd call that an "honest mistake." Now, it's a four-alarm microaggression.

Ask a student of Asian descent to help you with a math problem? What you're really saying, according to Sue, is "All Asians are intelligent and good in math/sciences." Sue fails to take into account that, while there are worse indignities than being considered good at math, Asians indisputably *are* better in math and science, on average, than other subgroups. In the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's worldwide math and science rankings, the top five countries are Asian. And on the SAT going back to 1986, Asians scored higher than every other group every single year. (On occasion, stereotypes become stereotypes for good reasons.)

But wait: Sue has more micro-crimes against humanity. Ask a woman her age and, after hearing that she's 31, look at her ring finger? What you're saying—with your eyes, apparently—is "Women should be married during child-bearing ages because that is their primary purpose." Tell someone "America is a melting pot"? What you're actually saying is "Assimilate/acculturate to dominant culture." Offer the remark "When I look at you, I don't see color"? What you're really doing, according to Sue, is "denying a person of color's racial/ethnic experiences." Have the temerity to express the view that "There is only one race, the human race"? Go right ahead, if you're pro-micro-genocide. Because the violence you're committing is "denying the individual as a racial/cultural being." Not a physical injury, perhaps. But, in Sue's telling, you're inflicting "a soul wound."

While Sue feels no compunction about playing microaggression meter maid, ticketing everyone else for the smallest imagined infraction, he's worked out a pretty great deal for himself: He can say whatever he wants, but is incapable of racism! As the *College Fix* reported, during a recent microaggression seminar at Northwestern University, when asked by a student if his entire speech was a "microaggression against white people," Sue informed the poor rube that only white people can be racist, since minorities like him "do not have the power to oppress in the way that a white person might do because they have the very institutions that support it." You

know, unlike a widely published Ivy League professor whose views are forced down the gullets of helpless participants in compulsory campus training sessions.

Apparently Sue can't even be racist when he says macroaggressively racist things, such as: "There is considerable evidence to suggest that oppressed groups have developed an ability to discern the truth and to determine reality better than those who occupy positions of power and privilege." Yet near the end of his book, on page 244, he seems perplexed: "Why do many white students find it so difficult to honestly dialogue on racial topics?" Here, "dialogue" is used as a term of art to mean "monologue"—one in which he does all the scolding, while you do all the listening.

But let's take a wild stab anyway at the cause of the reluctance he correctly senses. It might have something to do with his prior 243 pages of categorical indictment. If whitey (particularly male, heterosexual whitey) notices any "oppressed" group's differences—differences that Sue and company are always eager to accentuate—he's a racist/sexist/LGBTQA-ophobe. If he fails to notice any, or chooses not to, seeing everyone as undifferentiated, he's a racist/sexist/LGBTQA-ophobe. (If you're behind on oppression acronyms, the "QA" does not stand for "quality assurance," but rather, as the University of Nebraska's Student Involvement website instructs, for "Queer/Questioning, Asexual/Aromantic, Allies and Advocates—and the A can stand for All." The tent of suffering is a big one.)

If you're unfortunate enough to be in the "privileged" club (many of the nonprivileged, in Sue's estimation, enjoy cross-privileges—for instance, white women), then Dr. Sue's microaggression theory is like a jammed revolving door. No matter what you do, it sticks you coming and going.

A University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign study has concluded that black students 'walking into or sitting in' a roomful of white people can be considered a microaggression. At Northeastern University, courtesy of the LGBTQA Resource Center, students can now be trained and certified as human 'safe zones,' allowing them to receive 'safe zone stickers.'

It might be tempting to write off Sue's utterances as those of just another cloistered crank. Except, as the problem-miners like to say, it's more problematic than that. Because too many of the country's aggrievement factories—from college campuses to social-media echo chambers—are now parroting his rhetoric. Often, to even stranger effect.

Just witness the myriad microaggression websites, the equivalent of micro-Holocaust museums. There was Fordham's microaggression photo project, where students played the race card, being photographed with scrawled placards announcing "injustices," such as the lass who was asked—brace yourselves—"What are you?" Her thin-skinned answer to an innocuous question: "HUMAN. Being biracial doesn't make me a 'what.'" (The *BuzzFeed* article first featuring the project now has over 2,879,065 views.)

Then there's the "I'm Tired" photo project, where one thing nobody ever tires of is complaining how they've been wronged. Here, men and women remove their shirts and have scrawled on their backs what they're tired of. A skinny guy is "tired of being told I'm too skinny for a guy." A portly woman with love-handles spilling out over her waistband is tired of "assumptions being made about my eating habits because of my SIZE." Another is tired of "pretending I'm over my miscarriage." Which strictly speaking, is self-microaggression, but no matter—she's tired of it.

While there're tons of additional microaggression sites, the genre's gold standard is the Microaggressions Project, started in 2010 by Columbia students to address "power, privilege and everyday life." As the site's curators announce, "This project is a response to 'it's not a big deal'—'it' is a big deal." What's a big deal? Well, pretty much everything is, no matter how small.

Everyone can contribute, and seemingly, everyone does. I read only the first 35 pages or so, but microaggressees kvetch about every slight imaginable. A woman whines that her mother, aunt, and grandmother ask her, "Meet any nice boys?" when she comes home from college. A 13-year-old girl whines that the cashier at a video store counter asked her if she wanted the pink Nintendo DS Lite instead of the black one. A female engineer whines that when she was at a loud party and spelled out words with the phonetic alphabet (alpha, bravo, Charlie . . .) a guy asked her if her dad was a pilot: "Made me feel frustrated, like my achievements and abilities were written off." When two guys on a whale-watching trip joke that a female whale is fleeing their boat because she thought it was a male whale trying to mate, a beside-herself 20-year-old whines, "I am . . . a sexual assault survivor. I felt shocked, worthless, depressed."

But once you exit the online micro-Holocaust museums, here's a trigger warning: It gets worse. A cottage industry has sprung up. One that monitors the never-ending

overreach of the microaggression machine—everyone from *Reason*'s Nick Gillespie and *National Review Online* blogger Katherine Timpf to the watchdogs at Campus Reform and the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education. But especially vigilant are the gluttons for punishment at the *College Fix*, who actually run dispatches from student journalists throughout the country, fated to live at microaggression Ground Zero. Rake through their archives, and you find an embarrassment of microaggression riches.

To wit: A University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign study has concluded that black students "walking into or sitting in" a roomful of white people can be considered a microaggression. (This is destined to be a recurring problem, since blacks constitute only 13 percent of the U.S. population.) At Northeastern University, courtesy of the LGBTQA Resource Center, students can now be trained and certified as human "safe zones," allowing them to receive "safe zone stickers." (Is it any wonder that helicopter-parented, milk-fed millennials might regard a kindergarten-style sticker as a laudable achievement?)

At Washington State University, students were told they would be downgraded not only for using microaggressive descriptors such as "illegal alien," as well as "male" and "female," but also for failing to "defer" to nonwhite students. While at Brandeis University, a campus group that put up an exhibit to raise awareness about microaggression against Asians felt compelled to apologize, after a student protest, for triggering those Asian students who were "hurt by the content of the microaggressions in our installation." Putting me in mind of the comedian Chris Rock—nobody's idea of a knuckle-dragging conservative—who last year explained why he wouldn't play college campuses anymore: "You can't even be offensive on your way to being inoffensive."

At Wheaton College, an evangelical liberal arts school, a microaggression survey found that some students were offended that "the class worship band does not include worship styles familiar to my cultural background." At Ithaca College, students proposed an online reporting system in which the offended could rat out classmates for "belittling" or "isolating" words and/or behavior. At the University of Missouri, despite the state declaring it unlawful to restrict free-wheeling campus speech to campus "free speech zones," faculty were advised to correct any peer's "noninclusive language" and were given a four-page "inclusive terminology" guide to help them along. University of Illinois faculty have been advised to "nail" microaggressions through use of helpful admonishments, such as "Watch it! Racism."

Harvard's dining service felt it necessary to remove SodaStream stickers from its Israeli-manufactured water-machines, so as not to microaggress Palestinian students. A University of Washington union, in its bargaining demands for academic student employees, insisted on "genderless bathrooms, and working towards bathroom equity in access to already existing gendered bathrooms." Arizona State now offers a course on "U.S. Race Theory and the Problem of Whiteness." Princeton students have proposed making a "privilege-examining program" mandatory during freshman orientation. The student government president and Hispanic/Latino campus club at Northwestern admonished students not to eat tacos or drink tequila on Cinco de Mayo on grounds that it "offends, marginalizes, and isolates many of our friends, classmates, and community members."

How micro can the policing of microaggressions get? Consider it a sign of the times that when I checked GoDaddy's web domain registrar, nanoaggressions.com and picoaggressions.com were already taken.

To gain a better understanding of how microaggressions work, I arrange to meet with a microaggression consultant in Seattle. Caprice Hollins, Psy.D., "self-identifies" (as they say in the biz) as African-American, teaches at the Seattle School of Theology & Psychology, and along with a white colleague runs Cultures Connecting, a full-service diversity shop "addressing race relations in the 21st century" (microaggression being just one component of her larger consultancy).

Seattle, it would seem, is as good a place as any to be in this line of work since, progressiveness-wise, it can make even Portland feel like piney-woods Alabama. Its (gay) mayor recently unveiled 11 rainbow-colored crosswalks in honor of LGBT pride, and he pardoned a Tofurky last Thanksgiving (a tofu turkey). Its Fremont neighborhood boasts a 16-foot sculpture of Vladimir Lenin. And its Office of Civil Rights recently instructed government workers not to use potentially offensive terms like "citizen" and "brown bag" in official documents or discussions. The same office, along with a grant for "anti-racism technical assistance," even helped present a free microaggression workshop (taught by Caprice) so participants could "develop a critical lens to examine subtle forms of bias."

Steeped now in the literature myself, I cab downtown from the airport on Interstate 5, my own critical lens picking up potential microaggressions everywhere. There's the Yellow Cab I'm riding in—is it trying to culturally appropriate Asians? What about that Kenan Advantage fuel truck—is the "advantage" white privilege, as companies exploit POCs (people of color) by perpetuating blood-for-oil wars around the globe? And that sign saying "Use Exit 164 for ferries"—great, heterosexism.

Before meeting Caprice, I half expect to encounter a stern, humorless bore. She had, after all, for four years, headed Seattle public schools' Office of Equity, Race & Learning Support, which was tasked with dismantling

"institutional racism." She caused plenty of controversy during her hitch, occasionally garnering national headlines, as when she sent out the "myths of Thanksgiving" right around holiday break, including Myth #11: "Thanksgiving is a happy time. Fact: For many Indian people, Thanksgiving is a time of mourning . . . a bitter reminder of 500 years of betrayal returned for friendship." Her office's website defined "individualism" and "future time orientation" as being valued by white people, though they "devalue, stereotype and label people of color." By 2008, the city pulled the plug on the operation.

But when Caprice picks me up at my hotel, she has nothing of the Pilgrims-hater about her. Warm and inviting, with close-cropped hair and a radiant smile that makes her look 20 years younger than her 50 years of age, she immediately hugs me. Neither does she appear to be a political-correctness automaton, admitting to behaviors that could get her thrown into the stocks in some quarters of Seattle.

Caprice Hollins on the job

A devoutly religious woman, she tells me she listens to Christian music most of the time. She admits that when her kids were younger, she actually spanked them. When I notice a lighter in a cup-holder, she confesses—hold onto your hats—that she still smokes, though smoking is up there with baby-seal clubbing and Confederate-flag manufacturing among forbidden pursuits. I ask her brand, not wishing to microaggress by stereotypically assuming a black woman smokes menthols. She makes me guess. So I guess menthols. She says she wishes I'd guessed Capris, because of her name and the slender elegance of the cigarettes. But, she admits, gamely, "I smoke Virginia Slims Menthol Ultra Lights."

The idea of our day together is for Caprice to give me the upshot of her microaggression workshop. We'd planned on sneaking me into one, but her client didn't want some journalist skulking around. Instead, Caprice generously offered, "Just come see me and I'll do the training for you one-on-one."

In the car, however, she has some air that needs clearing, for Caprice is not a naïf. She knows the orientation of my magazine and draws a pretty good bead on where I'll land on microaggression. She doesn't put herself forward in the media much, not since she was scorched by the Thanksgiving-is-a-day-of-mourning controversy. She received irate letters that made her pretty fearful, inviting her to go back to Africa, and other "messages that kind of stripped me of my humanity." Not microaggressions, mind you. Just good old-fashioned racism.

Nevertheless, she's agreed to open her life to me, so she'd like me to open mine a little to her. "To create a safe space, right here in your Camry?" I ask. Yes, she says, not brooking my backtalk. "Like, I'm not comfortable right now," she says. She'd like to know a bit about my background. "I assume that you're white. How might that impact our relationship? How might your understanding of the culture that I come from?"

I scroll through my mental hard-drive in an attempt to ameliorate her concerns by making appropriate multicultural noises. Should I tell her *The White Shadow* was my favorite show as a kid? Should I tell her I've visited black churches just because I like the music? I don't tell her these things. Instead, I tell her that I'm a Gemini. (She's a Virgo—and our horoscope-compatibility prognosis indicates that we're both "excellent communicators and both very adaptable, a solid foundation to build on, however, your temperaments are very different, and a lot of give and take will probably be needed.")

I tell her of my diverse military-brat upbringing, of healthily Latino-and-black-populated schools I attended growing up, of the heavily black private school my kids have attended. All of this makes me feel like a total fraud. Like I'm bean-counting my own life, trying to check boxes to impress a stranger who will gain no real insight into the content of my character (assuming it has any) as a result of this cosmetic exercise.

"I would like to relax with you. I would like to tell you all kinds of things," Caprice worries aloud, "but I have these experiences. Is he tricking me? Is he being friendly?" I ask her if she's so scared to do this, why'd she agree to let me come? Because you can't always preach to the choir, she says, and because the stories of mine she looked up made her trust that I'll give her a fair shake. When she was training to become a therapist, a professor of hers told her how to approach clients: "'One of the first things you want to do is figure out what you like about them.' People aren't all bad, and it's kind of easy to maintain that enemy image." Besides, she adds, "I believe the work that I'm doing is God's work. Right now, if you weren't in the car with me, I'd be smoking my cigarettes and listening to Christian music. I see myself as an instrument for helping to make this world a better place for all human beings to live in."

We head to a diversity training session she already had on the books, which she allows me to observe before she conducts our private microaggression training later that afternoon. At the Sno-Isle Tech Skills Center in Everett, about half-an-hour outside Seattle, Caprice is conducting a three-hour session (the first of six she'll hold throughout the year) for a group of public-sector professionals on a two-day diversity retreat. Who precisely they work for I'm not permitted to say, as Caprice doesn't want to cause undue controversy, considering how it went for her with the Seattle public schools.

The crowd is mostly khaki'ed, socks'n'sandalista types—good, well-meaning (mostly) white people who don't seem the least bit offended having a black diversity trainer tell them they should feel privilege-conscious. Though when given the choice between two books for the seminar, *Understanding White Privilege: Creating Pathways to Authentic Relationships Across Race* and *Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do*, most choose the latter. (A little white-guilt-tripping is good, but let's not go crazy.)

After announcements are made and Chef Becky, the on-premises caterer, tells everyone to be expecting chicken vindaloo and Asian noodle salad for future meals, in keeping with diversity themes, Caprice commands the room. Going mic-less and pacing as she speaks (she logs roughly five miles on her Fitbit during any of her workshops), Caprice puts the crowd at ease by talking a lot about herself.

The house she grew up in was a rainbow-land of diversity. Born to a white mother and a black father (who she didn't meet until fourth grade), Caprice ended up with four blond-haired, blue-eyed siblings from her mother's previous marriage, and along the way gained another biracial sibling, plus two African-American foster siblings. When her mother started working on the Alaska pipeline for six months of the year, she was partly raised by a black couple who'd employed her mom at their barbecue restaurant. Caprice has a gay brother (who once became Miss Gay Seattle in a pageant) and, scandalously, a Republican brother. So she has spent much time thinking about identity—hers and everyone else's.

In the gentlest manner possible, she speaks of becoming "culturally competent," of ceasing "predatory listening" and "othering" others. Of learning how to become "comfortable with discomfort," of "institutional -isms" and of privilege and the "ongoing work" that is necessary—not "just white people's work." The crowd loves her. They gleefully belt out to their neighbors, "You are a good person!" when Caprice asks them to. They respond when she tells them that call-and-response is her cultural orientation. They laugh nervously, though forgivingly, when she tells them she spanks and smokes.

In the parking lot afterwards, I tell Caprice that was a pretty smooth performance. In the line of duty, I've seen some horse's-ass diversity trainers: corny, condescending, browbeating, intolerable. But she's good at her job. These people seem to want her back. Not that they'd have a choice if they didn't. She reminds me I've witnessed only the introductory session. "This is the easy part," she warns.

A few hours later, sitting at her dining room table in the Seattle suburb of Renton, we get down to knottier work. Pouring me a glass of red while popping the top off an Angry Orchard hard cider for herself, she fires up her Toshiba PowerPoint, and we are off, with the understanding that I will interject, argue, and generally be a Grade A pain-in-the-tuchis whenever the spirit moves. We have a three-hour sparring session.

When she brings up the Washington Redskins' name as a microaggression, I tell her I don't particularly care if the Redskins are caused public-relations pain and understand why some have taken issue—I'm a Dallas Cowboys fan—but that the controversy is largely bogus. Several predominantly Native-American high schools proudly use the name "Redskins." Caprice cites "cultural appropriation" and asks how the Jews would like it if the same were done to them as to, say, Indians contemplating the Atlanta Braves. I suggest that if the Jews' courage and martial brilliance were being celebrated—if a team were called, say, the Atlanta Maccabees—they'd have no problem with it.

Caprice brings up Jeremy Lin, the first American of Chinese descent to play in the NBA, whose Asian-ness prompted some negative assumptions. She highlights an ESPN headline about Lin—"A Chink in the Armor"—when the then-member of the New York Knicks helped lose to the then-New Orleans Hornets at the height of Linsanity. On the face of it, Caprice is right: The headline could easily be taken as a macroaggression. But the ESPN writer, a devout Christian, says he vomited in the bathroom after he'd realized what he'd done, and claims he never would have advertently racially slagged Lin. Even so, he was fired and banished to racist Siberia. Interestingly, Lin, himself a good Christian, reached out to the writer, lunching with him and forgiving him. Lin's impulse to be gracious instead of automatically taking offense is astonishingly rare in the Cocked Fist Culture.

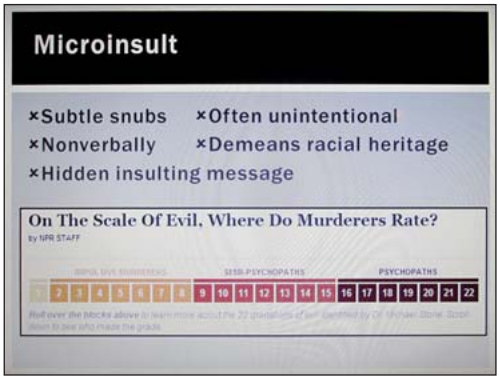
On the table, Caprice spreads an array of badges to show me her "Hot Button" exercise. The badges contain theoretically microaggressive messages, such as "I hate all people equally" and "Check the box for your race." In a workshop, participants are supposed to pick one that they've either said or don't understand. I pick "I'm not prejudiced, my wife is Asian," which I admit to Caprice is a weird thing for

me to say, since my wife isn't Asian. I can tell she's about to throw me out of her house, so I pick another: "I treat all people as equals."

What's so bad about that? She refers me to the diversity workshop I just witnessed, where she'd had a slide on "Equity vs. equality," showing three kids at a baseball game, all with the same vantage point from their nosebleed seats, but one tall enough to see the field himself, the two others needing crates of different sizes to stand on to see the exact same thing. And what about the "Assume positive intent" button? Does what I intend to say, instead of the negative motives the microaggression police inevitably impute, ever have any bearing on the subject?

"Of course it matters," Caprice says. "But first listen to people who've experienced marginalization. If you want to move beyond the potluck conversation, if you really want to know what my spirit is like, then start with yourself and let me tell you how I'm experiencing you without you getting defensive."

Frankly, though, defensiveness sometimes seems the only defense, since, as the African-American linguist John McWhorter has written of microaggression madness, "All it does is create endless conflict, under an idea that basically being white is, in itself, a microaggression."



A Hollins slide showing an NPR rendering of a 'Gradations of Evil' scale as an example of a 'microinsult'

This notion is brought to its illogical terminus when Caprice shows me a graphic, and asks me to locate the microaggression. The graphic ran over an NPR story on Columbia University professor and forensic psychologist Michael Stone and his 22-point "Gradations of Evil" scale, in which he rates murders from "justified homicide" at 1, all the way to "psychopathic torture murder" at 22. "What would make this an example of a micro-insult?" Caprice asks.

I puzzle over the scale for a couple minutes, coming up blank. I feel like I'm keeping company with the microaggression-equivalent of a fundamentalist sect of record-burners who, before torching their Led Zeppelin vinyl, play the songs backwards to decipher hidden messages from Satan. "It's okay, this is why I'm here showing you," she says. The numbers within blocks are all color-coded, she points out. Number 1 is a yellowish tan, and as you go up the scale, they grow progressively darker, so that by number 22, when you're in deep psychopath territory, you're into dark brown.

I see where she's going and I don't buy it, pointing out that NPR isn't typically thought of as a hotbed of racism. "I don't think that NPR intentionally set out to create a micro-insult," Caprice explains. "I think that they used skin tone." Pointing to the yellowish-tan side of the scale, she adds, "This is what we commonly refer to as normal skin, the color associated with whiteness." Actually, it's the color we usually associate with Asian-ness, but I let it stand. "And it makes sense they would use skin tone, because they're talking about murders," she continues. "The darker the skin tone, the more psychopathology a person has—it's part of your sickness, part of your DNA. . . .Tell me what questions you have about that."

I point out to Caprice that she calls it "skin tone," but to most people, it's just blocks of numbers. No skin tone is intended or even implied. By her criteria, if we actually flesh out the scale, the yellow-tan (which she calls white) progresses into gold, which then progresses into red, and on to dark brown. What are we supposed to deduce? That whites aren't as evil as Asians, who aren't as evil as Indians, who aren't as evil as blacks? And why are our Latino friends excluded? "Well, I'm not taking it that deep," Caprice says. "I'm really just saying in our society, we continue to perpetuate messages that the darker you are, the worse you are."

But once you start taking it somewhat deep, the trail of micro-tears could keep rolling on forever. To illustrate, when Caprice excuses herself to the bathroom, then returns, I tell her to close her eyes, I have a surprise. She does as instructed. I put on a hat I found in her hat bin—a "Live Lucky" ball cap with a four-leafed clover on it. I tell her to open her eyes, then ask her how dare she culturally appropriate the Irish, reducing them to a stereotype of lucky little leprechauns. She points out that she has some Irish in her on her mom's side. But it's her black husband's hat, so she's not getting off that easy—she's living under the same roof with a microaggressor.

"Are Irish folks communicating that they have a problem with it?" Caprice plays along.

"I don't know," I tell her, by now having had it with microaggressions. "They're Irish. They're probably too busy getting drunk or fist-fighting somewhere."

In the interest of full disclosure, I should point out that I have more meaningful, less contentious conversations with Caprice throughout the day. She tells me her fears, and I tell her mine, making it harder for each

of us to go for the jugular, since as G. K. Chesterton—a very white guy—wrote: "If you do not understand a man you cannot crush him. And if you do understand him, very probably you will not."

I tell Caprice that I'm afraid for our country. That it seems our fists are cocked and our fuses are short. That we're looking for an excuse to claw each other's eyes out, often over the thinnest of pretexts, which tend to fall under politicized identity issues. That we used to revere men such as Nelson Mandela, who didn't have to reach back into the past or invent injustices—he actually experienced them in real time, living under apartheid, having three decades of his life stolen from him in prison. And yet, when freed, and ascending to a position in which he could've brought down a tidal wave of vengeance and blood in the streets—justifiably so—he forgave his captors, and even befriended them. He didn't forget the bad things that had happened. He set up a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. But he understood that in order to heal his country, and himself, he had to choose to move on, to live a larger life, showing the way to so many others—even those who once oppressed him—since "resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies."

But now, seemingly, we've swapped the expansive, ennobling, long-game vision of a Mandela for the micro, embittered tunnel-vision of a Dr. Sue.

Caprice takes my point, cautiously and reluctantly, but she has stories of her own. Not micro-imaginings, like the NPR "skin-tone" scale, but her actual stories, the ones she's lived. She tells of when she, a light-skinned black woman who was always told how pretty she was, moved to a white school. She was nicknamed "Shadow," and wasn't asked to the school dance, and had her hair touched as if she were an exhibit at a petting zoo.

She tells me how her dark-skinned husband, a successful software salesman, had the cops called on him when he lost his key and was trying to get into his car. Because a black man trying to get into a nice car—well, that has to be trouble, now doesn't it? She tells me how her black nephew, just off work and taking the bus to the mall to meet a friend, was blocked by mall cops, who'd encountered some (black) troublemakers. Though her nephew didn't even know them, it was assumed they were cohorts.

"They're like, 'No, no, you cannot come into the mall,'" Caprice says. "And he goes, 'Oh no, excuse me, I'm here to meet a friend, just got off work. Would you like me to show you my text messages?' And they're, 'No, you may not come in.' Now my nephew, he's only 19. He can't understand how they can tell him he can't go to the mall. My husband and I are like, 'Look, this is how you get killed, okay? So don't try, in this moment, to prove who is right or wrong. We already know they're wrong. Just leave with your life, because it doesn't matter.' And he's like, 'This ain't right.' And so he refuses to leave. They throw him down on the ground. They jump on him. He's got something with his eye. They arrest him, they put him in jail. He can never go back to the mall again."

Caprice continues: "And my fear is that I've got a 6′3″ son, size 16 foot, probably he's not even done growing. Naïve child who has grown up in private school. And I tell people, talking with children about race is like talking with kids about stranger danger. You've got to prepare your kids that not all strangers are safe. You know, don't be fooled by the man with the puppy, right? And at the same time, the balance is you don't want them to be afraid, or like, 'All white people are bad.' I don't personally have any problem with police officers. I know police officers. I think they're great. Most black people see the necessity of cops. But what I think is that police officers are no different from anyone else and their biases—like me as a psychologist and the stereotypes that I hold, the danger is that I could misdiagnose someone. I could treat them wrong. But what happens when you have stereotypes that you don't know that you have, and you have a gun in your hand? . . . My ultimate objective is that I want you to get it as a white man, because if you don't get it, you know, it could mean my son's life."

Caprice and I have been at it all day, and one of my preliminary plans—since this is also the day of the first Republican debate, in what is admittedly a cheap journalism stunt—was for us to watch the debate together so she could pick off candidate microaggressions. But by the time it winds around, we are both wrung out. We've agreed that it's time for me to go. Caprice doesn't have much use for current events anyway. Even when it comes to the inflammatory racial Rorschach tests that seem to arise every few months, over whether a police shooting of a black man was justified or not. She'd rather read Harry Potter books or fantasy fiction, to escape, instead. She doesn't watch the news often. It makes her bitter, and bitterness is not something she feels she can afford to carry into "the work," because "if I want you to understand something, even if I risk failing, I can't try to hurt you in the process of getting you to understand, because that's the very thing I'm trying to get you to understand."

We sit in front of her television, Donald Trump droning on. Caprice is trying to call a cab for me, with no answer. I get on my phone and try to do the same, with the same result. As we sit there, listening to the ringing of our unanswered calls, Caprice says, "If you get a cab before me, it's because you're white."

I laugh hard. My new friend is joking. At least I hope she is. ♦

'The Duel After the Masquerade' by Jean-Léon Gérôme (1857-59)

On Their Honor

A way to look at dueling, then and now. BY JAMES BOWMAN

During the British election this past year, the press reported that a certain Janek (or John) Zylinski, a Polish prince living in Britain, had taken umbrage at the anti-immigration rhetoric of Nigel Farage, leader of the U.K. Independence party, and so did what has long come naturally to Polish princes by challenging Farage to a duel—with swords, in Hyde Park. Nigel Farage, who claimed not to own a sword, laughed it off, as did everyone else. One suspected that Prince Zylinski, whose father is said to have led a fleetingly successful cavalry charge against the invading Germans in 1939, was laughing, too. He was not wrong, however, in suggesting that a duel, with swords, was something "an 18th century Polish aristocrat and an English gentleman would traditionally do."

Touché
The Duel in Literature
by John Leigh
Harvard, 352 pp., $35

Touché: The Duel in Literature reveals that some people, at least, would have been laughing even in the 18th century. Dueling was a popular topic for literature partly because, like love, with which it was so often connected, it combined life and death seriousness with an inescapable sense of the absurd—as John Leigh appears to recognize in his chapter on "Paradoxes of the Duel." But this was true at least as early as Chaucer's "Knight's Tale" in the 14th century, a text not mentioned by Leigh, whose history begins with (and often returns to) Corneille's *Le Cid* (1637). Yet this very appeal of the duel to a characteristic Western literary sensibility has had a distorting effect on our historical rear-view mirror, making it necessary to distinguish between duels

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in literature and duels in real life.

Leigh does not always do this. But what a quantity of learning has gone into the making of this book! Stretching over three centuries, and comprising several European literatures in their original languages, as well as frequent excursus on the visual arts, *Touché* will be humbling to all but the most learned reader. Dazzling insights, for example, in tracing threads of connection among Corneille, Milton, Voltaire, Beethoven, and Victor Hugo that go far beyond the narrow subject of dueling, make it easy to forgive the occasional lapse.

Yet one is left with the sense there was nothing important that Leigh himself learned in writing this book that he did not know before he started. He, too, often assumes today's characteristic attitude of superiority to the past, as when he writes that "the transgressiveness of the duel is, once again in the French tradition, an essential part of its charm" without any hint that the Lit Crit jargon of "transgressiveness" was something quite unknown to the people who were allegedly charmed by it. Likewise, he cites as an example of 19th-century social Darwinism a text written more than 20 years before Darwin's *Origin of Species*. His own moral disdain for the custom of dueling is so taken for granted that, in the few cases where his examples do not treat dueling as, at the least, morally problematical (as in Dumas's *Three Musketeers*), his tone fairly drips with contempt for his material.

Nor does he appear to have any interest in, or curiosity about, the origins of so curious a custom in a particular idea of honor that prevailed in Western Europe from the 16th to the 19th century—and for a while, even in America. I think this is because Leigh, who is a lecturer at Cambridge, makes another assumption, all too common today, namely that the "honor" those old-time gentlemen were fighting over could only have been a pretext for something else, something political or psychological or both. Like Prince Zylinski, he knows he can rely on our willingness to take the joke of "honor" for granted. Thus he quotes approvingly Steven Pinker's opinion that "honor exists 'because everyone believes that everyone else believes that it exists.'"

That is, to say the least, a pretty tenuous form of existence. It is telling that *Touché* begins not with Corneille but with the Abbé de Saint Pierre almost a century later, who was "one of the first writers to pathologize the duelist." On the first page we are told that, at least as early as the 18th century, "duellists were supposed to belong to the Dark Ages," as if the opinions of the anti-dueling authors he mentions were the only ones in the century worth mentioning. Likewise, he says, "literary depictions of duels make them seem honorable," as if it were too obvious to need saying that they were not honorable. Without some understanding of the actual social history of dueling, an account of its various literary manifestations seems random and arbitrary.

I hope John Leigh will not think it presumptuous of me if I fill in a few of the blanks he has left in this history. Although he recognizes that, in revolutionary France (and, he might have added, revolutionary-era America), dueling underwent a form of *embourgeoisement*—as, "instead of deploring the duel as an aristocratic abuse of power that needed to be extirpated, the middle classes deemed it a privilege they might henceforward share with the nobility"—he doesn't see that, in fact, it was a matter of social mobility from the start. Most of our knowledge of the early history of dueling comes from Italian etiquette books of the 16th century written for aspiring courtiers and others who needed to know how to behave like true aristocrats.

Always interested in the arguments of those opposed to dueling—he notes, for instance, that while the 17th century tended to favor religious arguments, the 18th century was more likely to argue that dueling was inauthentic medievalism or classicism—Leigh never properly considers or appears to have any curiosity about those, like Bernard Mandeville, also in the 18th century, who thought with the authors of the dueling manuals of two centuries earlier that the custom was a powerful enforcer of civility. He has no time for our own Alexander Hamilton, who, though not a fictional character, continued as many did to think it incumbent upon himself to fight a duel even though he disapproved of the practice. If he had been asked, Hamilton would have said that he could do no other and preserve his honor; but today, the argument from honor is no argument at all but mere posturing absurdity—like that of Prince Zylinski.

This raises the question of how the author can have spent so much time and effort on an activity with which he is so much out of sympathy—or rather, only with literary treatments of it with which he is in sympathy. Partly, it is true, this is because so many of the authors who wrote about dueling *were* out of sympathy with duelists and intended to ridicule them and their absurd ideas of honor. But the subject is a bigger and more interesting one than this book allows. Like so many literary histories, it has difficulty in avoiding what Herbert Butterfield called "the Whig interpretation of history"—which can see in the past only an evolutionary unfolding of the present.

The up-to-date taste of the author necessarily takes precedence over that of the authors he studies—and the taste tendency is further exacerbated by the need to stay pretty rigidly within the "canon" of old texts certified to be worthy of preservation into our own time, partly by lending themselves to readings that flatter our assumptions about the world.

Early on, Leigh writes that "the past is a veil. Once discovered, questions of legitimacy, autonomy, and freedom that the duelist asks of society turn out to be troublingly modern." What he means is that this is the way he chooses to see them—rather than as even more troublingly unmodern. A little more humility before the intolerable strangeness of the past would have made this interesting history a good deal more interesting. ♦

B&A

Digital Rock

The business, and technology, of packaging music.

BY MICHAEL M. ROSEN

LPs for sale, London (1957)

Nineteen hundred ninety-five proved to be a landmark year in the digital music revolution. It was then that a brilliant German audio technician retooled his digital sound algorithm, that a record industry executive took the helm at a new studio, and that a line worker in a CD manufacturing plant discovered the promise of stealing music. Together, these developments would shape the future of the industry for decades.

Twenty years on, Stephen Witt has written a riveting, meticulously reported account of music's technical, economic, and cultural "liberation." *How Music Got Free* fuses the rigors of investigative journalism, the science of acoustic analysis, and the sensitivities of social criticism, ultimately yielding a highly readable and compelling, if somewhat incomplete, narrative of the advent of cheap and convenient access to digital music.

How Music Got Free
The End of an Industry, the Turn of the Century, and the Patient Zero of Piracy
by Stephen Witt
Viking, 304 pp., $27.95

Witt weaves together three separate tales, each representing a colorful strand in the larger tapestry. First, he examines the technological emergence of the MP3 file, a digital format developed in Germany's Fraunhofer Institute by audio whiz Karlheinz Brandenburg. His innovative algorithm compressed the zeros and ones on a compact disc by a factor of 12, a reduction necessary for the hard-drives, processors, and modem lines available in 1995 but not so restrictive as to degrade musical quality—except to the ears of the most refined audiophiles.

Brandenburg's group competed against MUSICAM, a more politically connected outfit bankrolled by the Dutch conglomerate Philips, whose own algorithm, nicknamed MP2, required less processing power but compressed data less efficiently. Luckily for Brandenburg, the growth of processor speeds outpaced bandwidth expansion, and his format won the war.

Soon after signing its first deal to livestream National Hockey League games in MP3, the Fraunhofer group expanded its reach, giving away its software but commanding a royalty on every MP3 download—a total now estimated in the billions. Brandenburg and company strongly believed in intellectual property rights—after all, their proprietary technology depended on patent protection—but their innovation unwittingly triggered an avalanche of copyright infringement.

In this regard, Witt next explores the life and times of Doug Morris, a multimillionaire music industry poobah who, as CEO of the Universal Music Group in the late 1990s and early 2000s, presided over the industry's richest years and struggled with its gravest threat. After an unceremonious dismissal by Time Warner, Morris was hired by Edgar Bronfman Jr. to head a division of what would become UMG, a perch from which he would sign legendary artists across a range of genres, including Tupac, Dr. Dre, Jay-Z, Justin Bieber, and Taylor Swift.

But while, by 1999, Morris had revived UMG as the largest studio in the world, and the industry enjoyed its most successful year ever, between 2000 and 2003 CD sales would fall by 30 percent industry-wide. Brandenburg's MP3 technology had enabled Napster and even more ambitious networks to empower users to swap music files for free. The industry's response—suing MP3 device makers and college dormitory downloaders

POPPERFOTO / GETTY IMAGES

Michael M. Rosen is an intellectual property attorney and writer in Israel.

alike—provoked public disgust and arguably stoked the copying fire.

Ultimately, Morris attained redemption. After years of technological failures, including Pressplay, UMG's proto-iTunes, Morris was the first major recording bigwig to ink a deal with iTunes itself in 2003. A few years later, inspired by his teenage grandson, who compulsively watched for free on YouTube the hits his grandfather had invested millions to produce, Morris finally managed to monetize the music video by creating Vevo, which offers viewers access to tens of thousands of free videos—so long as they first watch a 30-second advertisement.

Finally, Witt uncovers the story of Bennie Lydell Glover, an enterprising CD pressing plant worker in western North Carolina, who turned out to be the "patient zero" of music piracy. As a packager at the PolyGram factory, owned by UMG (and therefore an employee of Morris's), Glover learned at a 1995 party that coworkers were smuggling unreleased CDs from the plant, and soon began doing the same. Technically adept, he would then upload them to a top secret site where tracks would be disseminated weeks before their official release.

Although the sites Glover supplied did not sell music, instead restricting access to a tiny group of top hackers—and here, Witt's tour of the techno-savvy "dark web" is fascinating—the songs inevitably leaked to the public and badly eroded album sales, especially for Universal. The FBI eventually caught up with Glover, but not before he had personally uploaded some 2,000 purloined albums, making him, in Witt's telling, "the greatest music pirate of all time."

At times, the book falters. Witt briefly mentions but largely neglects the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, a measure enacted by Congress in 1998 to ratchet up statutory penalties on file-sharers, the backbone of the industry-backed lawsuits in the early 2000s and the key political angle to the story. The author contends that lawmakers turned a deaf ear to the recording industry when it sought additional protections against digital copyists—"the music industry was not well liked on Capitol Hill," he writes, and "found itself abandoned by the state"—but just a few years earlier Congress had armed it with the DMCA, a potent weapon it duly deployed with FBI reinforcements.

Witt also gratuitously bashes William J. Bennett, an estimable public servant and moral crusader, for having the temerity to criticize hip-hop's violent, misogynistic lyrics. Perhaps the author, who admits to illegally downloading 15,000 albums in his late teens and early twenties, isn't the quintessentially objective narrator of a story of astounding ethical and legal complexity.

While, in the early years, there may have been a certain strained rationalization to unbundling an inefficient and bloated good—the compact disc album, costing $17.99 and stuffed with unmemorable B-sides next to hit singles—that justification, such as it was, dissipated with the emergence of paid, legitimate media like iTunes, which now boasts more than 40 million songs. Still, the author does an admirable job chronicling this transformation, and fairly treats almost all of the characters, their motivations, and perspectives. By uncovering hidden gems like Bennie Lydell Glover, and ably telling their stories, Stephen Witt sheds light on a burning issue that has mostly generated only heat. ♦

B&A

Devil's Island

The challenge of incarceration for civil society.

BY RACHEL LU

Lockdown on Rikers
Shocking Stories of Abuse and Injustice at New York's Notorious Jail
by Mary E. Buser
St. Martin's, 288 pp., $26.99

Mary E. Buser came to Rikers Island in the early 1990s as a student intern in social work. Returning a few years later, she worked her way up the ladder and eventually found herself in the solitary confinement wing, evaluating screaming, self-mutilating inmates to determine their suicide risk. That job was stressful. She quit. Fifteen years later, she has collected her harrowing anecdotes into a book. It's a nice, bracing mood-stabilizer if the crisp fall weather has you feeling too cheerful.

Lockdown on Rikers has a marked downward trajectory. The opening chapters make jail sound, if not exactly fun, then at least like the sort of sturdy, structured environment that might be salutary for the truly dysfunctional. By the end, you're grateful that it's the end. You may also catch yourself musing on whether you should start a criminal defense fund, just in case. (Oh, you're scrupulously law-abiding? Your attorney will be pleased to hear that when you call.)

Buser's cup runneth over with sad tales, but one might be enough to paint the purgatorial picture. That would be the story of the suit.

Rikers Island is a jail, not a prison. What this means is that inmates are, for the most part, *not* convicts but detainees waiting for their cases to wind their way through the legal system. Most will eventually accept plea bargains, but for the few who persist, court clothes become a concern. Rikers won't take you shopping for a jacket and tie, and a jumpsuit doesn't impress a jury.

Keith Bargeman had spent his two years in lockup closely guarding a precious possession: his court suit. This was such a daunting task that

Rachel Lu is studying prison reform as a Robert Novak journalism fellow.

suit-owning inmates would sometimes refuse medication if drowsiness were an expected side effect. You have to be on your game to protect a suit in Rikers. One day, Bargeron was pulled away suddenly to meet with his lawyer and returned to find the suit gone. His outburst of anguish landed him in solitary confinement for the next 10 days—and that was it for his court suit.

This is far from the most gruesome of Buser's stories, but it's representative in important ways. In jail, people's lives revolve around concerns that are as personally momentous as they are weirdly artificial. There's no good reason (on an island lousy with locks!) why securing a single, essential possession should be so hard. But that's what happens when your life is ordered in every particular according to the whims of distant bureaucrats. Things stop making sense.

Buser herself isn't the sort to reflect on the Kafkaesque dimensions of her workplace. She is a cog in the prison-industrial machine, just trying to keep her inmates alive, sane, and properly medicated until they can be sentenced. Quite obviously, she views them more as victims than sinners, and gives them the benefit of every doubt. But one needn't sympathize with her perspective to find interest here. Facilitating mental health at Rikers is such a farcical exercise that her stories read like a social worker's edition of *Ultimate Ninja Warrior*. How do you keep a man healthy and well-adjusted when he lives in a hellhole, and your only tools are a prescription pad and sympathetic ear? Work quickly, because you're on a tight schedule.

In truth, Buser's virtues as a narrator stem largely from this shallowness of perspective. We aren't subjected to social theories or utopian meditations on a society without jails, and Buser says very little about race. Readers looking for rounded perspectives on our corrections system may wish to seek out some complementary narratives, such as Ted Conover's *Newjack: Guarding Sing-Sing* (2000) or Pete Earley's *The Hot House: Life in Leavenworth Prison* (1992). But Buser has made a real contribution to the literature, particularly at a time when our jails and courts are coming under greater scrutiny.

Americans are becoming uneasy about our jail system, and for understandable reasons. For most people, life behind bars ranges from intensely unpleasant to traumatic—which might be acceptable if we were reasonably confident that *all* inmates (or at least the vast majority) were guilty of *something*.

The view from Rikers Island (2015)

With jails, however, that is far from clear: Most prisoners have yet to be convicted of anything and a substantial number of them are mentally ill. (Buser tells of chronically psychotic inmates who pass their days locked in mildewed cells, pacing and muttering to themselves.) Public safety is important, but attention must still be paid to the rights of the accused.

The suicide of 22-year-old Kalief Browder this past spring offers a disturbing reminder of how little "presumed innocent" means for those who are unable to afford bail. At 16, Browder was accused of a mugging and sent to Rikers. For three years—nearly two of which were spent in solitary confinement—he maintained his innocence and refused to take a plea bargain. Ultimately, the charges were dropped and Browder was released, but his experiences left him emotionally disturbed. From a legal perspective, at the least, he died an innocent man.

Who is to blame for such a miscarriage of justice? It might be comforting to avenge this particular victim by raining fury on some racist prosecutor or corrupt politician. But there are no obvious candidates for such a bloodletting: This is simply the sort of thing that happens when the system gets backed up, as it often does. Prosecutors like to go home at the end of the day, and so do judges. In 2013, the average New York City defendant waited close to two years before going to trial, and for those too poor to afford bail, those months were likely spent on Rikers Island.

Recognizing that jails function largely as holding cells for the possibly guilty and the mentally disturbed, we should care about the inmates' quality of life. *Lockdown on Rikers Island* is not a policy manual, but we can glean some relevant insights—especially from Buser's reflections on the deterioration of living conditions in the mid-1990s, when rates of incarceration started to spike. New Yorkers were rightly grateful to Mayor Rudolph Giuliani for making their streets safer, but everything comes at a price. Overcrowded prisons are unpleasant places to live where resources become strained and guards get nervous. In her time, Buser suspected that correctional officers issued gratuitous punishments simply because the solitary confinement unit was large and beds elsewhere were scarce.

The good news is that needed reforms are likely to be mutually reinforcing. Improvements in policing and our courts could make conditions more livable in jails by diminishing overcrowding and freeing resources for remaining inmates. Caution is required here, of course: No one wants to sacrifice hard-won improvements in public safety. But some prudent decriminalization measures might help reduce inmate populations without increasing violent crime. Investing more in law enforcement and in courts might also reduce the strain on jails. Over the longer run, such investments could pay for themselves in diminished incarceration costs. ♦

AP / SETH WENIG

B&A

Thinking Anew

What, precisely, changed in the 18th century?

BY JAMES M. BANNER JR.

When Immanuel Kant posed his celebrated question, "*Was ist Aufklärung*?" in 1784, little could he have supposed that he'd inaugurate an inquiry that has yet to end and is unlikely to end soon. Appropriately, Kant's was a philosopher's question, not that of a historian, a question that sought answers in general principles, not particular realities. A historian would more likely have asked "*Was ist die Aufklärung*?" with that concrete, definite article inserted into Kant's interrogative. And that's how historians pose the question now: What was the Enlightenment—the long, 18th-century recasting of European thought that we used to learn about in high school history courses?

The distinction between the philosopher's and historian's ways of going about answering Kant's question, as well as the different answers they yield, is the theme of this erudite book. It's very much the work of a historian, not of someone who wishes to enter the debate about whether the Enlightenment was or was not a Good Thing or whether the desacralization of life has brought progress or regress—questions, among many others, that continue to stir debate and disagreement in political as well as academic life. Ferrone's central aim is to counter the argument that the Enlightenment can be reduced to "just one more chapter—however important—in the history of Western philosophy."

For Ferrone as for everyone since the 1780s, Kant's definition of the Enlightenment is the starting point for every history of it. Kant's answer to his own question was a product of the very revolution of ideas from within which he spent his days and of which he was an unabashed champion. To him, enlightenment was a process, not an era or movement, a process characterized by rational progress in human affairs toward the goal of a "universal cosmopolitan condition." The application of reason to the creation and protection of freedom was its central feature. Kant was clear in distinguishing between the work of "practicing empirical historians" and of philosophers who search for "an idea of world history which is to some extent based upon an a priori principle." Since then, this distinction has typically characterized the separate paths taken by historians and philosophers in their thinking; and, as Ferrone insists, it continues to demarcate sharp differences within Enlightenment scholarship.

Such differences also mark the value scholars place on Kant and the Enlightenment's arch-critic Hegel, who emphasized the "phenomenology of the spirit," and by doing so, only deepened the divide between abstract philosophers and empirical historians of the Enlightenment. If thought was, in Hegel's terms, "immanent," then it couldn't readily be explained historically—entangled in time and in the changes of human society.

This divide persists today, as Ferrone is at pains to show throughout his book, and that requires him to lead the reader through the thickets of Marx, Nietzsche, Horkheimer, Adorno, Foucault, Cassirer, Heidegger, and even to Pope Benedict XVI and his claims for a Catholic Enlightenment, as he explores the "history of an idea" of his subtitle. It also leads him into discussions about the important work of such recent Enlightenment scholars as Franco Venturi and Jonathan Israel.

American readers, however, are likely to knit their brows over the absence of any reference to the distinctive American Enlightenment that included figures as diverse as Jonathan Edwards, Thomas Jefferson, and Ralph Waldo Emerson.

For historians, the strength of Ferrone's book is its insistence that the Enlightenment can't be abstracted as a movement in Western thought and nothing more—as something standing outside the flow of the rest of history, a phenomenon regarded only as a development in formal thought. In Ferrone's view, all thinking emerges from the convergence of events, perceptions, and thinking that constitute everyone's days. Thinking can't be isolated from its context. For instance, one can't understand 18th century European thought without seeing it as linked dialectically against the ancien régime that it fought, and as responding to the new phenomenon of public opinion. Thought can't be explained by itself. No historian will disagree. But it's also testament to Ferrone's learning that he acknowledges the importance of philosophers and

The Enlightenment
History of an Idea
by Vincenzo Ferrone
translated by Elisabetta Tarantino
Princeton, 232 pp., $29.95

Immanuel Kant

ASSOCIATED PRESS

James M. Banner Jr. is the author, most recently, of Being a Historian.

theorists who've deepened our understanding of thought even while ignoring its contexts.

Given the aims of Ferrone's book, therefore, readers should not expect to find in it a full history of the Enlightenment. Nor, however ably translated from the Italian by Elisabetta Tarantino, will its pages prove as easygoing to the uninitiated as the late Peter Gay's robust two-volume work *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*. This is a scholar's book, filled with trenchant observations, about a thick literature as much as about the Enlightenment phenomenon itself.

Yet even when faced with the necessity of making sense of matters as taxing as Hegel's glutinous thought, Ferrone manages to render some of his predecessors' arguments into lucid Kantian statement, if not into Boswellian exuberance. It also helps that he restricts himself closely to the subject of his subtitle, and does so in snippets—16 short essays that repay consideration one at a time, given their erudition and the historical and philosophical complexity of the long historiography of *le siècle des Lumières*, as the French call the Enlightenment.

Those with an interest in the history of debate over the Enlightenment will be particularly interested in Ferrone's two principal, stoutly argued, historical arguments. The first is that the Enlightenment must be understood in its basic independent manifestation—as a movement, stretching through the long 18th century, aimed at subjecting all previously received and conventional thought about religion, society, politics, and culture to reasoned examination free of previously held thinking and to stretch the boundaries of freedom beyond the male elite where it had been taken for millennia to reside.

To those who have mostly encountered the Enlightenment in courses on Western thought, such a position seems unremarkable. But to historians it's a critical assertion. For if the Enlightenment is seen as a development within Western thought that stands on its own—as, in Ferrone's words, "an epochal rift and cultural revolution of the *ancien régime*"—then it wasn't the seed ground of the Terror, and the French Revolution was not the child of Voltaire, Condorcet, Rousseau, and other Enlightenment thinkers.

For some, the distinction is unnecessary; for others, it is central to their thought and politics. If the Enlightenment can be implicated in the excesses of the revolution and the revolution's resulting Bonapartism, then at the very least it's a stain on Western history, even if not the precursor to, say, National Socialism, as some have seen it. Such an argument as Ferrone's—the Enlightenment as an independent development in Western thought—has always been a defense against those, especially those on the right, who hold the Enlightenment responsible for all the horrors of the modern world. Ferrone's defense of the Enlightenment as a movement in and of itself is unlikely to still this debate, but it's a strong entry into it.

The strength of Ferrone's book is its insistence that the Enlightenment can't be abstracted as a movement in Western thought and nothing more—as something standing outside the flow of the rest of history, a phenomenon regarded only as a development in formal thought.

His second argument is for the existence of a distinct, identifiable Late Enlightenment, "a self-contained period and original cultural system" of the 1770s and '80s that deserves to be studied, as the larger Enlightenment itself should be, in its own right. The Late Enlightenment was a time when the "values, ideas, practices, and specialized vocabularies" of previously small circles "became objects of large-scale cultural consumption in salons, Masonic lodges, universities, academies, and in the courts." They did so, he argues (following the arguments of Robert Darnton and others), "thanks to the publishing industry, the theatre, literature, painting, music, and the sciences."

Nothing could be clearer in such arguments than Ferrone's muscular commitment to the precedence of history over philosophy. Not only does he distinguish the material conditions of European society from those that gave birth to Enlightenment thought in the early years of the same century; he distinguishes the intellectual and cultural contents of this later phase from those of the earlier one. It was in the later decades of the 18th century, he believes, that was born "the modern concept of man's liberty," an idea so powerful that the Republic of Letters came to deeply influence high politics and, at least in the person of the so-called enlightened despots, led to reform from above.

While all of this is compelling, it's not going to forestall skepticism on many fronts. If, as Ferrone writes, "the invention of the modern concept of man's liberty" must be credited to the Enlightenment, then how can we deny that the welling up of revolt, then revolution, against the ancien régime, even the grotesque excesses of the Terror and the Vendée, owed nothing to Enlightenment thought? And while there's surely much to be said for the distinctiveness of the Late Enlightenment, and thus to evaluating it in its own right, isn't there something unnecessarily overexquisite in such scholarly line-drawing—in effect, setting up yet another subspecialty in the current madhouse of academic specialties?

But rather than noting its shortcomings, let's accept this book for what it certainly is: clarifying analysis of arguments, stretching back, more than 230 years, over the origins, contents, and significance of one of the most decisive developments in all of Western history. ♦

B&A

Epistolary Art

What one connoisseur would say to another.

BY HENRIK BERING

Bernard Berenson, Kenneth Clark (1950)

That aesthetic discernment can exist entirely on its own, devoid of human warmth, is demonstrated by the lives of the art connoisseurs Bernard Berenson and Kenneth Clark. As leading arbiters of taste in their day, both enjoyed all the trappings of success. Berenson, the oracle on Italian Renaissance paintings who had gotten his start by helping Isabella Stewart Gardner build her collection in Boston, held court at his Tuscan villa, I Tatti, in the hills above Florence. This was the fulfillment of his youthful fantasy of a monastery whose inhabitants could live lives of exquisite contemplation, admired by the rich and powerful.

His protege Kenneth Clark, whose meteoric career in Britain included becoming director of the National Gallery at the age of 30, was that rare specimen: an art critic who could translate complex ideas into easily understandable terms. Books such as *Landscape into Art* and *The Nude*, and his 1969 television series *Civilisation*, had the reviewers cheering. Ennobled as Baron Clark of Saltwood, he, too, ended up owning his private paradise, Saltwood Castle in Kent, complete with its very own moat.

My Dear BB . . .
The Letters of Bernard Berenson and Kenneth Clark
edited by Robert Cumming
Yale, 584 pp., $45

But beneath the elegant façades, there were cracks: Known for his poisonous tongue, Berenson was intensely resentful of his colleagues in the art world, particularly German scholars, many of whom happened to be Jews. "Truly, German Jews do make a Nazi of me," he wrote to Clark in 1936, and compared their writings to the stench of "the bat droppings at the Ajanta caves in West Central India." Transplanted at the age of 10 from a Lithuanian *shtetl* to live among better-off German Jews in Boston, he was left with a permanent scar which no amount of Harvard polish could cover.

In Clark, the combination of an unresponsive mother and a public school upbringing also had psychological consequences. This was a man who once confessed that storms at sea held no terror for him since he was too unfeeling to be scared. Upbraided by Berenson for his reserve, Clark answered that he came from "an undemonstrative family" and his feelings were "as stiff as an unused limb." For him, art provided the surrogate.

My Dear BB . . . contains their correspondence from 1925 to the autumn of 1959, a few months before Berenson's death at 94, and comes with excellent chapter introductions by its editor, Robert Cumming. The two first met in 1925 when Berenson was 60 and Clark was 22, just out of Oxford. Clark was to help Berenson with an update of his *Drawings of the Florentine Painters* (1903), which together with his four books on the Italian masters had cemented Berenson's name. Though Clark was let go after two years, they remained in touch.

The letters reflect the rarefied atmosphere of connoisseurship and are crowded with estimable names: the Oliviers, Margot Fonteyn, Edith Wharton, Somerset Maugham, Calouste Gulbenkian, the Aga Khan, and assorted British royalty. Shop talk and pet peeves abound. As the celebrator of clarity, order, and harmony, Berenson feels ill at ease in the 20th century: He deservedly dismisses Picasso as "an academic draughtsman of genius" who, when not finding buyers, "deliberately took to the woods." Clark is somewhat more attuned to the modern—although whether from a need to conform, or from inner conviction, we don't know. Both see abstract art as a dead end, amounting to what Clark elsewhere has called "tasteful pieces of decoration."

Berenson's bêtes noires, German art historians, make repeated appearances: "The Talmudic Hegelian writings . . . turned out by the phonies of Central Europe." Berenson was inspired by the late Victorian aestheticism of Walter Pater, with his stress on pure enjoyment. To Berenson, only the painting

Henrik Bering is a journalist and critic.

mattered, and his expertise was based on an intuitive feel for the artist; the Germans favored a broader, less subjective, approach, stressing context and iconography. Clark's strength, notes Cumming, was his ability to combine the two approaches.

In addition to his gifts as critic, Kenneth Clark also possessed a prodigious organizational talent. With war looming in 1938, as director of the National Gallery, he oversaw the removal of its paintings to safe storage, providing a dress rehearsal for the real thing: "I now feel confident that I could move an army corps," he writes to Berenson.

Their correspondence was cut off by the outbreak of hostilities. Clark, whose sangfroid made him ideally suited for the challenges of wartime, had an excellent war. Since Winston Churchill had nixed any idea of moving the National Gallery's paintings to America—"Bury them in the bowels of the earth but not a picture shall leave this island"—Clark had them removed to a slate quarry in North Wales. To keep up public morale among Londoners, he arranged lunchtime concerts and exhibitions of contemporary artists, and had one painting a month brought in from Wales.

Berenson chose to stay in Italy, and when America entered the war, he and his wife were no longer protected as citizens of a neutral country. Thanks to his reputation, however, his belongings were not seized, merely inventoried. Things got difficult with the German occupation in 1943: The Berensons and their most valued effects were hidden in a villa belonging to the San Marino ambassador. Miraculously, I Tatti escaped with only a few broken windows.

After the war, the correspondence resumed. With Berenson getting frailer, most of the news concerns the progress of Clark's books, articles, and lectures, including his Washington lecture series on *The Nude*, which, we learn, the sponsors had initially announced without a title for fear of upsetting the prudish! Berenson is generous in his praise for Clark's work—"you can write as none of us since Ruskin or Pater"—while worrying about the prose in his own books.

At some point, the protestations of mutual affection become tiresome; so, too, does (in Mary Berenson's words) Clark's "queer mixture of arrogance and sensitive humility." The one topic I would like to have known more about is studiously avoided: money—and the role of Joseph Duveen, the interwar years' most successful (and unscrupulous) dealer in Renaissance paintings. To maintain his lifestyle, Berenson had, for decades, been authenticating paintings for Duveen and receiving 25 percent of the profits for his services. This left him open to accusations of conflict of interest, but Duveen is hardly mentioned here.

So what do they say elsewhere about each other? In the first volume of his memoirs, *Another Part of the Wood* (1975), Clark's tone had become decidedly cool, which, Robert Cumming suggests, may be because he knew that critical biographies of Berenson were in the works, notably Meryle Secrest's *Being Bernard Berenson* (1979), which highlighted the Duveen connection. Clark wrote of Berenson as sitting "on the pinnacle of a mountain of corruption."

For his part, in his diaries, Berenson carried a sizable chip on his shoulder regarding Clark: "K.C. not only inherited his fortune, but increases it. He buys and sells works of art, and that counts only as a gentleman 'exchanging' a good thing for a better one. If I sold any picture I should at once be put down as a 'dealer' because I started poor."

Blamed as they are by today's art crowd for all manner of sins, ranging from elitism to Eurocentrism, why should we care about Kenneth Clark and Bernard Berenson? Whatever their personal flaws, both had a keen sense of the fragility of cultures, and both were convinced that, above all, beauty matters. And while Berenson's books may be tough sledding, Clark's writings remain models of clarity. ♦

B&A

Tiny Caesar

Any ways left to make mobster-monsters interesting?

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

Black Mass is the latest cinematic portrayal of the life and career of James "Whitey" Bulger, the gangster who ran roughshod over Boston for nearly 20 years with the odd assistance of an FBI agent whose secret informant he was. Nine years ago, Martin Scorsese's *The Departed* merged the plotline of a Hong Kong movie called *Infernal Affairs* with l'affaire Bulger and came out with a terrific Oscar-winning picture.

Black Mass is carefully made and intelligent, and far more somber and serious than its predecessor, but it will not join *The Departed* in the Hollywood history books. For *The Departed* understood what *Black Mass* does not: In the James "Whitey" Bulger story, James "Whitey" Bulger is the least interesting character. Jack Nicholson's Frank Costello was a supporting player in a larger story about a cop on his tail and the federal agent who had secretly been working for him. It was the cat and mouse game between the two officers of the law (played wonderfully by Matt Damon and Leonardo DiCaprio) that made *The Departed* so memorable. Nicholson was colorful but minor.

Black Mass
Directed by Scott Cooper

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* The Weekly Standard*'s movie critic.*

Johnny Depp, Mary Klug at home

The problem is that the real Whitey Bulger wasn't colorful at all. He was—and is, I guess, as he's still alive—a garden-variety homicidal maniac, and Johnny Depp plays him pretty much as an alligator in human form. He's ruthless and forbidding and humorless, quick to kill and have others killed: all menace and very little charm. In a misguided effort to make him seem more complex, the movie tries to suggest that Jimmy had a bit more charm and a bit less menace before he lost a son to Reye's syndrome in the early 1970s and then his mother later in the decade. But that's just Hollywood armchair psychology—not to mention another way to give Depp more screen time.

Two people make the Whitey Bulger story genuinely fascinating. One is John Connolly, the FBI agent who was compromised by their relationship. He is played here brilliantly by Joel Edgerton, who made a sensational debut this summer as a writer-director with *The Gift*. The other is his politician brother Billy, who was president of the Massachusetts state senate even as his brother was running a criminal syndicate in Boston. Benedict Cumberbatch renders him as a Kennedy manqué rather than the steely-eyed, tough-guy, up-from-street pol he actually was, but he's good too.

The movie should center on these two. But it can't really be about Billy, because *Black Mass* is a true story, and we will never really know the nature of the relationship between Whitey and Billy unless one of them spills the beans before he dies. So, then, it ought to be about Connolly, who begins with the notion of turning Billy into his snitch but instead becomes his snitch's catspaw. But every time the Connolly part of the tale begins to gather steam, as he works successfully to redirect the attention of other law enforcement officials away from Billy, the director Scott Cooper finds it necessary to refocus his attention on his boring psychopath and the superstar playing him.

Just in case we forgot, toward the end of *Black Mass*, Cooper and screenwriters Mark Mallouk and Jez Butterworth give Depp two Oscar-bait scenes straight out of other movies. The first, in which Depp stares down a colleague of Connolly after the FBI agent reveals a family secret about how to marinate a steak, is a shockingly lame variation on Joe Pesci's immortal am-I-a-clown-to-you rant in *Goodfellas*. The other, in which Depp menaces Connolly's wife, seems derived from the little-known 1987 picture *Street Smart*, in which a pimp played by Morgan Freeman (in the performance that made him a star) does the same to one of his hookers. Pesci won an Oscar and Freeman was nominated for one. Depp seems likely to follow Freeman into the final five at the Dolby Theatre next February but unlikely to follow Pesci onto the stage.

Both scenes are embarrassingly phony, and they demonstrate how difficult it has become to offer a portrait of a mobster-monster on screen that is anything but clichéd. After James Caan's Sonny Corleone and Pesci's Tommy DeVito, and six seasons of *The Sopranos*, the string has kind of run out on gangster psychopaths who terrify even the people who commit crimes with them. Playing one is like imitating Ethel Merman: The mannerisms are so well-established that, by now, anybody can do it. Depp has it in him to be a great actor, and he desperately wants to give a great performance here. But there just may not be another great gangster performance to be given. ♦

WARNER BROS. PICTURES

"I mean, look, I am a real person."
—Hillary Clinton on **Face the Nation,** *September 20, 2015*

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...PTEMBER 29, 2015 — ONE DOLLAR CHEAP

VOTERS CONTINUE TO DOUBT CLINTON IS 'REAL PERSON'

Candidate Short-Circuits in Iowa

By RICHARD DATCHERY

BETTENDORF, Iowa — Despite her insistence that she is a "real person," presidential candidate Hillary Clinton continues to face doubts among voters over her humanity. "I mean, look, I am a real person with all the pluses and minuses that go along with being that," she told CBS's "Face the Nation" host John Dickerson. But Clinton preceded the answer with a maniacal laugh that audio analysts have now concluded is precisely the same laugh, decibel-for-decibel, as all her other laughs during the campaign.

"This is the most absurd thing I've ever heard," said Clinton's communications director Jennifer Palmieri. "Hillary Clinton is a real person. And like all real people, she gets tired after a full day of work. So to make things less stressful for her, we installed a recording of her laugh inside her molars. She simply opens her mouth wide and the laugh comes out. She's so cutting edge!"

According to a recent CNN/ORC poll, only 26 percent of the survey's participants considered Hillary Clinton to be a real person. Another 38 percent were certain she is a cyborg—half robot, half human—while 36 percent believed her to be fully mechanical, or as the survey put it, "like Zoltar from the movie 'Big.'"

Mike Matus

A frame from cell-phone video recorded by a bystander shows a still-smiling Hillary Clinton suffering a circuitry meltdown at a diner in Bettendorf, Iowa.

There is no question the campaign trail can be exhausting. But at a meet-and-greet at Ross's Diner in Bettendorf, Clinton was in the middle of shaking hands when she broke down—literally. "She just sort of bent halfway while extending her hand," said one waitress. "And then sparks just came out of her elbow followed by a plume of smoke from her ears." Aides quickly placed Clinton onto a dolly and wheeled her into the back of a truck. Witnesses reported overhearing her saying, "Thank the maker! This oil bath is going to feel so

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Volkswagen Chief: 'I Was Only Following Orders!'

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