

**MAYBE DON'T SEND  
THAT TWEET**  
ANDREW FERGUSON

the weekly

# Standard

FEBRUARY 19, 2018

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## THE CHEERLEADER

**Betsy DeVos makes her mark  
as Education Secretary**

**BY PETER J. BOYER**



# Contents

February 19, 2018 • Volume 23, Number 23



- 2 The Scrapbook *Look who hates the New York Times, Justin Timberlake, & more*  
5 Casual *Hannah Long on untold tales*  
6 Editorials *The Disgrace of the Olympics • Ugly but Necessary*  
9 Comment  
*In search of black and white* BY ANDREW FERGUSON  
*Newt's strategy for GOP victory* BY FRED BARNES  
*Remember the Pueblo—seriously* BY PHILIP TERZIAN

## Articles

- 14 Him Too? *French and Swiss women denounce Tariq Ramadan* BY DOMINIC GREEN  
16 Irrationalism in Politics *Now more than ever* BY JAMES W. CEASER  
18 Unwarranted Influence *The Memo and the Fourth Amendment* BY ERIC FELTEN  
22 The Obama-Trump Foreign Policy *Retreat is not a strategy* BY THOMAS DONNELLY & WILLIAM KRISTOL  
24 A Different Kind of Republican *Matt Gaetz wants you to know he's more than a one-dimensional Trump apologist* BY HALEY BYRD  
26 The Democrats' Fake Mustache *Manufacturing a dream candidate to take down Paul Ryan* BY CHRISTIAN SCHNEIDER  
28 Statesmanship and Mr. Lincoln *An appreciation on the occasion of his birthday* BY ALLEN C. GUELZO

## Features

- 31 The Cheerleader *Betsy DeVos is making her mark as education secretary* BY PETER J. BOYER  
35 Whirlpool Goes to Washington *Or why you are going to pay more for your next washer* BY TONY MECIA

## Books & Arts

- 38 When Localism Works *Success stories for better cities and better lives* BY GRACY OLMSTEAD  
41 Understanding Boko Haram *Despite outside influences, the jihadist group is uniquely Nigerian in nature* BY JAMES H. BARNETT  
43 Portrait Overpainted *A sequel to Henry James's novel gets its heroine wrong* BY LAUREN WEINER  
44 Mr. Nice Guy *A missed opportunity to understand how we understand ourselves* BY ELI LEHRER  
45 Roger Federer's Smile *The temperament of the tennis great* BY TOM PERROTTA  
47 If Looks Could Gill *This Best Picture nominee is a bizarre but lovely mer-myth* BY JOHN PODHORETZ  
48 Parody *Making redactions great*

# You'll Never Guess Who the Left Hates Now

**B**REAKING: The *New York Times* is now a “white supremacist paper.” That’s according to Sarah Kendzior, columnist for Canada’s *Globe and Mail* newspaper, frequent NBC News contributor, and writer for *Fast Company*. Talk about all the news that’s fit to print!

Citing the “multiple Nazi puff pieces, constant pro-Trump PR, and praise for [Stephen] Miller,” Trump’s adviser, Kendzior came to the only reasonable conclusion: White supremacy “is the guiding ideology of the paper.”

Now it might seem rather odd to tar the outlet of, among others, Paul Krugman, Charles M. Blow, and Nicholas Kristof as “white supremacist.” But it’s not that unusual a complaint. Graham Vyse wrote an interesting piece in the *New Republic* last week exploring the “left’s war against the *New York Times*.” It seems that such luminaries of the left as *HuffPost*, NARAL, ThinkProgress, and that guy who founded *Daily Kos* are all convinced



that the *New York Times*—yes, we repeat, the *New York Times*—is part of the Vast Right-Wing Conspiracy.

The evidence? The occasional column that argues for moderately conservative positions; a recent piece that profiled (but hardly glorified) an actual white supremacist in Ohio; and the fact that reporters like White House correspondent Maggie Haberman . . . report. It would be better, you see, if the *Times* reporters did less journalism and instead imitated that Iraqi journalist who threw a shoe at a former U.S. president. Donald Trump may often lambaste the *Times* as #failing, but according to the unhinged left, he should be thanking them and possibly even putting them on his payroll.

Vyse reports that Oliver Willis, a leading blogger on the left, says the “*Times* ‘hates’ liberals and harbored ‘institutional hatred’ for [Hillary] Clinton during the campaign.” If the *Times*’s slavishly pro-Democratic party and pro-Clinton line is “hate,” we shudder to think what “love” would look like. ♦

## People Who Need Peoplekind

**I**n 1990 the comedian George Carlin memorably mocked the tendency to replace the word *man* with *person*. “Little kids would be afraid of the ‘boogie-person,’” Carlin scoffed. “They’d look up in the sky and see the ‘person in the moon.’ Guys would say, ‘Come back here and fight like a person,’ and we’d all sing ‘For It’s a Jolly Good Person.’ That’s the kind of thing you would hear on *Late Night with David Letterperson!*”

Nearly three decades later, the joke grows, shall we say, progressively less absurd. Speaking at a forum at MacEwan University in Edmonton, Canadian

prime minister Justin Trudeau took a question about government regulations on volunteer organizations. “Maternal love is the love that’s going to change the future of mankind,” the young woman was saying when she was interrupted by the premier. “We

like to say *peoplekind*,” he said, hand waving, “not necessarily *mankind*, because it’s more inclusive.”

Trudeau received condign ridicule on social media for this priggish and totally unnecessary interruption (which he later, unpersuasively, claimed was a botched joke). For one thing, is *peoplekind* even a word? Surely he meant the slightly less dissonant *humankind*.

But maybe he has a point. We admit that the term *mankind* and related descriptors—especially *he* and *him* for a person of either sex—do raise hackles among a certain class of people. Perhaps we should start correcting ourselves, if for no other reason than to avoid being publicly humiliated by sanctimonious



politicians. Unfortunately, though, our language and literature are shot through with *man* and *mankind* and associated language. We think for instance of the second epistle of Pope's *Essay on Man*, which begins:

*Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;  
The proper study of mankind is man.*

"The proper study of peoplekind is people" just wouldn't have worked. At an only slightly lower literary level, it wouldn't have sounded quite right for Paul Simon to sing:

*Maybe I'm laughing my way to disaster  
Maybe my race has been run.  
Maybe I'm blind to the fate of peoplekind,  
But what can be done?*

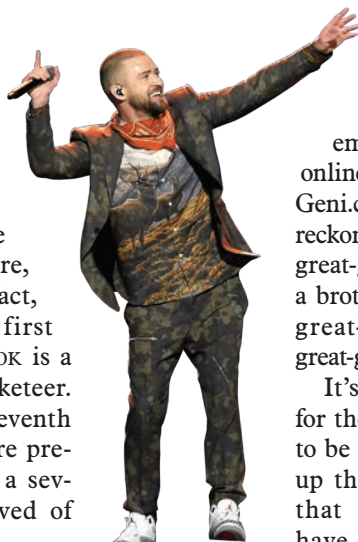
And it's hard to imagine Neil Armstrong stepping onto the lunar surface and suddenly exhibiting woke sensitivities: "That's one small step for a person and one giant leap for peoplekind."

Well, never mind. If progressive politicos and academics keep insisting on *people* for *man*, we're not going to lose sleep over it. From George Carlin to your humble SCRAPBOOK, it's always good for some cheap jokes. ♦

## More Breaking News

Pop star Justin Timberlake's Super Bowl halftime song-and-dance routine got, umm, mixed reviews. THE SCRAPBOOK, though, watched the performance with rapt attention, and we have to say that to our eyes and ears Timberlake was simply stunning.

You may be inclined to discount our objectivity, though. In the interests of full disclosure, we alert readers to the fact, revealed here for the first time, that THE SCRAPBOOK is a cousin of the ex-Mouseketeer. To be precise, we are seventh cousins. To be even more precise, THE SCRAPBOOK is a seventh cousin once-removed of Justin Timberlake's.



BOTTOM: KEVIN MAZUR / WIREIMAGE / GETTY



We only just learned of the relationship ourselves, thanks to an email alert from the online genealogy company Geni.com. By their expert reckoning, our great-great-great-grandfather is a brother to Timberlake's great-great-great-great-great-grandfather.

It's clever marketing for the genealogy service, to be sure. But we looked up the stats and learned that we very probably have somewhere north

of 100,000 seventh cousins at large in the world. Sure, one of them commanded a stage at the Super Bowl. Odds are good, though, that quite a few of our kin at that remove are scoundrels or worse.

THE SCRAPBOOK is reminded of the story, told to us years ago, of the professional genealogist hired to spend a day on archival research. He presents his flabbergasted client with a report on his family tree and a bill for \$5,000. The client protests that the time and labor can't possibly be worth more than \$1,000. The genealogist agrees. But I now know a whole lot about your family, he says, and the rest of my fee is for keeping my mouth shut. ♦

## Organizing the Ink-Stained

In recent months, we've been wondering how journalists are getting any work done, what with all the Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie songs they've been singing. In January, workers at *Slate* and *Vox Media*—which includes the websites *Curbed*, *Eater*, *Recode*, *SB Nation*, the *Verge*, and, yes, *Vox*—announced they were joining the Writers Guild of America East. In addition, WGA East has now “organized shops including Vice Media, the *Huffington Post*, Gizmodo Media Group, *The Root*, *Thrillist*, *Salon*, and others,” reports the *New York Post*.



Washington journalists gather to celebrate their newfound solidarity.

There's also a renewed effort underway to bolster the union at the *Washington Post*, which had been dwindling thanks to several rounds of buyouts of the paper's veteran employees. The *Post*'s union drive has been covered as dispassionately as one might expect from other media outlets. “Jeff Bezos Screws Over Workers at Amazon. Now He Wants to Do the Same at the Washington Post,” reads one *HuffPost* headline.

While *HuffPo*'s overt pro-union politics aren't surprising, this log-rolling in support of the *Post*'s union

raises a fair question: Since unions are one of the most dominant forces in Democratic party politics, at what point do newspaper unions compromise claims to objectivity? Should readers of the *Post*'s reporting on labor policy under a Republican administration be blamed for wondering if it's being filtered through a pro-union sensibility?

While the *Post* these days trumpets its new motto, “Democracy Dies in Darkness,” darkness can in fact be a useful protection in the voting booth. *Vox* employees accused the owners of *Vox Media* of “union busting,” because their employer insisted on a vote to recognize the union, citing the fact that they had heard from employees who were fearful of speaking out publicly against unionizing.

Indeed, unions oppose secret-ballot workplace elections precisely because they make it harder to pressure workers into voting yes. (The *Vox* union gleefully noted that *Vox* founder Ezra Klein, when he was a blogger at the *Washington Post*, had endorsed so-called “card check” elections, which are the very opposite of a secret ballot.) Unions, meanwhile, cloak many of their own internal practices in darkness. Members wishing to find out how their union leaders are spending their dues quickly discover it's hopeless. Union financial disclosure laws are intentionally weak. Journalists who join a union are throwing their lot in with one of the biggest opponents to transparency in American life.

We don't doubt that the workers at many of these media enterprises have grievances. It's not rainbows and lollipops churning out digital content around the clock for low pay and even lower prestige. But organized labor has a knack for accelerating the demise of sclerotic, unprofitable industries. The scribes may hope the union will protect their jobs and score raises, but recent history isn't on their side. After the WGA East organized *Gothamist* and *DNAInfo* last year, the two websites' billionaire owner Joe Ricketts promptly shut them down rather than deal with the headaches. ♦

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## Stories of Berlin

Not many people knew he was named Berlin. A roly-poly, soft-spoken man with a scruff of white hair and a big belly, Berrell Long lived quietly in a rundown house in Fries, Virginia. Thin, patchy wallpaper held the place together. There was no insulation, so he had to pile logs in a dirty old woodstove to keep warm in the winter. His life revolved around church and his garden. He watched a lot of *National Geographic* shows.

Berrell wasn't the crazy uncle in the attic, but no one seemed to really know anything about him. I didn't discover his real name until nine years ago, when he made one of his rare appearances for my grandfather's funeral. It was James Emory Berlin Long in full. The disclosure of this name, exotic in a land of Johns and Bills, opened the floodgates. He began unfurling tales of travel and excitement, the saga of a life that stretched back into the heart of the Depression.

The first surprise was the languages. In his slow drawl, he spoke Spanish and Korean, with a smattering of Japanese and German thrown in for good measure. He had spent a lot of time in the military, from Korea to Europe.

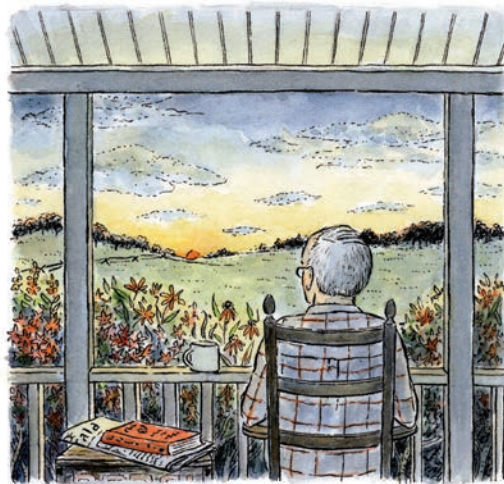
His stories were a series of vivid images from foreign lands and long-past days. Sleeping four to a bed during the Depression; GIs smoking "hemp" in Korea; the slaughter of the 65th Puerto Rican regiment at White Horse Hill ("those poor old boys . . . falling like stalks of corn"); the blackened earth of Hiroshima; Christmas in Gifu, Japan; old women harvesting the fields in Neuhausen, Germany.

In 1951, he narrowly avoided a knife fight in Kokura. He'd picked up a girl, and they were riding along

in a rickshaw when Berrell saw a tall, kimono-clad man running behind, his arms in his sleeves, watching the pair intently. Berrell sensed something was wrong, and his instinct was confirmed when the man pulled a long knife from his sleeve.

Berrell said, "We knowed what he was up to. He would have got me if he could have."

Thinking quickly, he instructed the rickshaw driver to make a detour, cutting off their would-be attacker and



leaving him in the dust. He attributed the man's malice to anti-Americanism, but he wasn't bitter. "It'd be the same in America if some country was to take over."

In the '60s, he was stationed in Stuttgart as a driver, and on the weekends he traveled. He and a buddy once crossed the Alps in a rickety Volkswagen and found themselves stranded in Switzerland. Taking shelter in a hotel, they realized that neither of them spoke French and the hotel owners "couldn't find a soul, not a soul" who spoke English. "Well, there we was, stuck." Still, they managed to convey that they wanted supper, and Berrell pointed to the only thing he understood on the

menu. Fried chicken: It brings the world together.

Berrell never told a lie, but he told a lot of tales he'd heard secondhand. He held that some of his friends had found Dracula's castle in Germany, and that a distant relative named Rose had murdered a salesman and buried him under her house (it was common knowledge she'd sold her soul to the devil). But his stories never sprang out of nothing: He told me Erwin Rommel had dug a tunnel underneath the university where Berrell stayed in Germany. It's an urban legend, but one that was passed around just at the time Berrell had been there.

After his traveling days were done, he lived quietly. He worked at a factory. When he retired, he disappeared into a quiet, slightly shabby life. When he spoke about the old days, there was no wistfulness. He rejected any idea of the glory of war and talked matter-of-factly about the deaths in his unit. It was a thing that happened. He remembered the way the Susa Valley shone in the sunlight but didn't pine for it. Appalachia, Virginia, his old house, his garden: They were good enough.

In fact, they were better. He wasn't modern enough to pretend otherwise. Mark Steyn once observed that disciples of multiculturalism respect all cultures but know nothing about them. By contrast, the old colonialists may have lacked the progressive sensibilities of their descendants, but they could recite the minutiae of foreign cultures and distant tribes.

That was Uncle Berrell, with his store of languages and tales, his empathy and candor. The old soldier from Appalachia—he died two years ago this week—never had a COEXIST bumper sticker. But he was a man of the world in the old sense, a true cosmopolitan hidden away in a Virginia hollow.

HANNAH LONG

# The Disgrace of the Olympics

The 2018 Winter Olympic Games have opened in the mountains of northeastern South Korea. The next two weeks will showcase some of the finest athletes in the world: men and women who've trained relentlessly and, whether they win a medal or not, deserve our esteem and best wishes. The United States has sent 244 competitors—109 women, 135 men—and we have every reason to think they will bring credit to our country.

Yet we will not enjoy these games with an untroubled conscience. Stories of sexual abuse and rampant cheating are everywhere in the news, both here and abroad—more so this year than in years past. The Olympics have become so scandal-ridden and cynically unsportsmanlike as seriously to raise the question of why we continue them.

The most immediate problem of this year's games arises from their location. Pyeongchang is a beautiful place, and South Korea has every reason to exhibit its culture and economy. But its northern neighbor is a bloodthirsty regime that starves its people, rules them by terror, and blackmails free nations with threats of nuclear war. No game should include North Korea as a participant. Yet not only has the Kim regime sent athletes to Pyeongchang, it has dispatched its propaganda orchestra, a massive cheerleading squad, and several "dignitaries" whom the United States has sanctioned for human-rights abuses. In some events, moreover, North and South are fielding a combined "Korean" team, giving the world's most sinister regime a form of de facto equivalence with its democratic neighbor. The Pyeongchang games are a public relations coup for the Kim crime family.

Team USA bears marks of shame, too. In recent months, Americans have learned with horror about the crimes of Larry Nassar, a team doctor for USA Gymnastics. Nassar has been given multiple life sentences for sexually abusing scores of young girls—more than 150 have publicly accused him—over the course of nearly two decades. But USA Gymnastics weathered the scandal virtually unscathed. Yes, its board was forced to resign, and its staff will now be required to undergo training in how to spot abuse. That's no proper punishment for an organization that ruined hundreds of young lives in pursuit of a few extra pieces of gold, silver, and bronze.

Cultures of abuse have long characterized women's gymnastics and figure skating. Joan Ryan's 1995 book *Little Girls in Pretty Boxes* detailed the multilayered miseries already being endured by America's girl Olympians a generation ago: eating disorders, depression, alienation from friends and family, and a firm step on the path to failure in later life.

What drives all this twisted behavior is, of course, an adherence to a win-at-any-cost philosophy of sports. The

nations of the West upheld the ideal of amateurism for nearly a century after the creation of the modern Olympics in 1896. "Sport, which still keeps a flag of idealism flying," wrote the English novelist John Galsworthy in 1923, "is perhaps the most saving grace in the world at the moment, with its spirit of rules kept, and regard for the adversary, whether the fight is going for or against." The line was a favorite of Avery Brundage, the American president of the International Olympic Committee from 1952 to 1972.

But in the affairs of nations, the spirit of sportsmanship was no match for the lust for prestige. The Olympic Games have long been just another form of cultural warfare. Cheating was probably part of them from the beginning. Heinrich "Dora" Ratjen passed himself off as a female high jumper at the 1936 Olympics, and for decades Western amateurs had to compete against Soviet bloc athletes who pretended to be amateurs but were in fact employed by their states. The Red Army maintained its own sports arm.

Rules requiring amateur status for Olympians were relaxed after Brundage's retirement in 1972 and finally discarded in 1992. Since then, the United States—and most other nations—have fielded fully professional teams. This has enhanced the athletic performance and our medal haul, but it has made the whole enterprise aggressive and unscrupulous and, concomitantly, less appealing to the ordinary spectator.

Doping is endemic. The list of athletes disqualified for cheating grows longer with each Olympics. After the 2012 summer games in London, for instance, more than 100 athletes were either barred from competition or had their medals stripped for doping violations. The Pyeongchang games have an outright ban on the Russian team, so flagrantly and consistently has Putin's state organized doping for its athletes. And yet the ban isn't quite a ban: The International Olympic Committee has allowed 168 Russians to compete under a "neutral flag" so long as they can prove they haven't used banned substances.

The Russians are the preeminent violators, but the United States is far from guiltless; Lance Armstrong and Marion Jones are sadly anything but exceptions.

The Olympic Games have long since fallen victim to the mercenary spirit of professionalization that afflicts every sport when fame and money creep in. But "professionalization" isn't quite the right word. The possibility of lucrative sponsorship contracts and global fame entices young athletes to give themselves to a sport they almost certainly can't make a steady living by once their metabolisms decelerate. Some manage to stay in their sports by coaching; many others

don't know where to turn, their aspirations abandoned like the empty Olympic stadiums and sports complexes that dot the outskirts of Rio and Seoul and Montreal.

Can anything be done?

Some Olympic teams clearly require more stringent oversight by governing boards. The abuses rampant within USA Gymnastics must have been quietly ignored by large numbers of people. The United States Olympic Committee, for instance, was informed of Nasser's crimes as early as 2015 but took none of the necessary actions. The problem wasn't structural but cultural. The Olympics are a multibillion-dollar business. Hence the cheating scandals, the violent and repugnant behavior both on and off the field, and the heart-breaking stories. Every reform idea deserves debate, but real reform will be a time in coming. For now Americans are best

advised to turn their attentions to more local competitions.

We're put in mind of Alypius, the friend of Saint Augustine who felt he could not bear Rome's cruel and bloodthirsty gladiatorial matches. A few of Alypius' companions dragged him to the arena, but he refused to watch, keeping his eyes fast shut. But when he heard the roar of the crowd, he could contain himself no longer and opened his eyes. "He fell," Augustine recalls in the *Confessions*, "and fell more pitifully than the man whose fall had drawn that roar of excitement from the crowd."

The Olympic Games are not gladiatorial matches, but neither are they altogether free of the moral quandaries that dogged the conscience of Alypius. Americans may wish to learn from his mistake and, when they hear NBC's Olympic theme, turn off the television. ♦

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## Ugly but Necessary

With Republicans in charge of the White House and Congress, you might expect to see some budgetary restraint. Or at least some gesture to fiscal conservatism. You would be wrong. Consider the bloated budget deal the Senate arrived at on February 7.

This unlovely compromise measure, stalled as we go to press but expected to pass soon, is the consequence of divergent philosophies. Republicans, rightly in our view, reject the notion that the federal government's primary responsibility—national defense—should be subject to the budgetary sequester that restrains growth in discretionary spending on domestic programs. Democrats take the opposite view. And since Republicans can't pass the bill without some Democratic support, both sides are getting something. Republicans get an additional \$80 billion in defense spending for the current fiscal year and \$85 billion for next. Democrats get an additional \$63 billion in domestic spending this year and an additional \$68 billion next.

The result is a deal that lifts both military and non-military spending limits by nearly \$300 billion through 2019, appropriates an additional \$160 billion to overseas military and diplomatic operations, and suspends the federal debt limit for a year.

Senate Republicans were right to insist on raising the caps on military spending. The U.S. armed forces are underfunded, and a weak military has a way of encouraging threats and the globe's worst actors. As Ronald Reagan memorably put it in 1984, "None of the four wars in my lifetime came about because we were too strong. It's weakness that invites adventurous adversaries to make mistaken judgments." Democrats, avoiding the larger question of global capabilities, argue that the Pentagon has a lot of pork-barrel spending. But for once the GOP has a good talking point on the issue: Secretary of Defense James Mattis has begun the first ever

agency-wide audit. Democrats seem wholly uninterested in similar diligence. To cite just one illuminating contrast here, the Senate budget deal spends billions on backstopping Medicaid, but does nothing to address the estimated \$140 billion in annual Medicaid fraud.

The real problem with the federal budget isn't military spending. House speaker Paul Ryan correctly points out that we could get rid of the U.S. military in its entirety and we would still have a deficit. The problem isn't even discretionary spending. The federal government supports a dizzying array of unnecessary programs and agencies. We would love to see that money given back to the people who earned it, but domestic discretionary spending, wasteful as so much of it is, isn't ruining the republic. Entitlement spending is.

The problem starts at the top. While the president clearly understands the need for economic growth—the United States simply can't pay its bills at 2 or 3 percent annual growth—he has ignored or dismissed the need for budgetary restraint. And he has explicitly spurned any idea of reforming entitlement spending. The vast preponderance of the federal government's deficit and debt owes itself to three programs: Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare. Mandatory federal spending—almost all of which goes to just these three programs—currently accounts for 70 percent of the federal budget. Over the next decade, according to the Peterson Foundation, this will grow to 77 percent. This will mean shrinking discretionary spending by a quarter—a 24 percent cut in defense, in transportation, in education, and so on.

Pleading for more military spending while highlighting the critical need for fiscal reform elsewhere is a tricky argument. But it's an argument Americans are fully capable of understanding. For Republicans to make it, they'll have to get out of the deal-making, everybody's-a-winner mentality that gave us this improvident spending deal. ♦

ANDREW FERGUSON

# In Search of Black and White

A story for our times: It took place, of course, on Twitter, though it was first written up in the trade publication *Inside Higher Ed*.

Safiya Umoja Noble is an assistant professor at USC's Annenberg School of Communication, where she specializes in "marking the ways that digital media impacts and intersects with issues of race, gender, culture, and technology design." Like all authors, she is eager to plug her new book, *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*, due later this month. So last week she took to Twitter: "Shameless plug: If everyone bought one right now for themselves, and one for a friend, this book could have a chance at improving the internet for women and people marginalized by tech."

Beneath her tweet she attached a link to the book's Amazon page, featuring this promotional blurb: "Run a Google search for 'black girls'—what will you find? 'Big Booty' and other sexually explicit terms are likely to come up as top search terms. But, if you type in 'white girls,' the results are radically different. The suggested porn sites and un-moderated discussions about 'why black women are so sassy' or 'why black women are so angry' presents [sic] a disturbing portrait of black womanhood in modern society."

Like an idiot, one fellow tweeter actually took Prof. Noble up on her offer. Alexander Magoun is a historian at the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers' History Center. Evidently he ignored the good little angel that must have been perched on his shoulder, whispering, "Stop! No good can come from

this!" Instead, he listened to the little devil on the other shoulder, hissing, "Come on! Why not see if she's right? *Whatcha waitin' for?*" So he typed in his own searches.

At the top of the first Google page for "black girls," Magoun got a link to "Black Girls Code," a STEM school in San Francisco for "underrepresented" girls. Next was a link to a "Black Girls Dance Compilation" on YouTube, and another to a video called "2 black girls fight." There was an article from the left-wing news website theroot.com: "Little Black Girls Are Killing Themselves. Does Anyone Care Enough . . ." The *Guardian* newspaper, another left-wing outlet, had an article about the "unfair perceptions that haunt young black girls." Last was a website called

"Black Girls Rock!" Not a big booty in sight.

Then Magoun tried "white girls." All the hits on the first page were to websites about the 2016 movie *White Girl*, which is the story of a young woman who hooks up with a Puerto Rican drug dealer, inherits a kilo of coke after he's arrested, tries to sell it, and then loses all the money. It's depressing. I've seen it.

Again like an idiot, Magoun thought that the world was aching to know whether the claim in Noble's blurb was quite as absolute and dispositive as it sounded. The world was not, but the little devil won again. Magoun took to Twitter, using the IEEE account:

"These Google searches for <black girls> & <white girls> don't quite match thesis; Images for <white girls> arguably far worse." He

linked to the two Google pages from his own searches.

Professor Noble responded to the tweet politely and professionally. She must be new to Twitter.

"The book was written over several years, and search results are dynamic," she tweeted back. "However, the thesis of the book is not based on a comparison of only two results. Have you read the book?"

"It's a response to the Amazon description," Magoun responded, "& we look forward to reading the more careful, extended analysis, & broader supporting cases." The little angel buried its head in its hands.

Word got around quickly, as word does on Twitter. An assistant professor of English at ASU (specialty: "feminist digital media") tweeted that she was shocked: How could IEEE's Twitter account be run by someone too ignorant to understand how changeable search algorithms are?

Perhaps the little devil piped up: "Hey! That sounds like an insult to me! *You ain't gonna take that lying down, are ya?*" For whatever reason, Magoun chose to reply: "I'm aware of the influence of both a user's searches and changes in search algorithms."

It was here that Twitter did what it does best: sink itself into a cauldron of vituperation, inept sarcasm, unreason, non sequitur, reckless allegation, and unchecked hostility. Tweets poured in. "Way to immediately disregard years of scholarly work by demonstrating the white patriarchal frame of your professional org," wrote @gabrarian, a Ph.D. student in education. The demands kept coming. Magoun should apologize, he should be fired, he was a mansplainer, a sexist, a racist . . .

He went to ground.

From what I can tell, no one came to his defense—by, say, pointing out that all Magoun had done was casually test a claim made by a new book.



That no one did so is a sign of his instant and total radioactivity. It's also a sign of Twitter segmentation. The corner of the twitterverse where tweeters chew the fat about "issues of race, gender, culture, and technology design" is probably not a Shangri-La of ideological diversity.

Magoun's one undeniable transgression was to use a corporate account to advance what was properly a personal opinion, although a glance through IEEE's Twitter feed suggests staff have often done the same. Under other circumstances, Magoun's tweet would have been what nowadays we like to call a "fact check." Noble herself retweeted the promotional material, which claimed to support the book's arguable thesis with an equally arguable piece of evidence. Magoun tried to suggest the truth was more complicated. Probably the last time he does that.

He reappeared on Twitter the next day. Gone were the figurative angel and devil. Instead, hovering behind him were the specters of Magoun's grim-faced bosses at the institute. You could almost hear them: "Professor Noble? We've had a little talk with Alexander and he has something he'd like to say to you."

"Dear Professor Noble," Magoun tweeted, in two installments, "On behalf of IEEE, its History Center, & myself, I apologize for my unprofessional & disrespectful remarks on your forthcoming book, *Algorithms of Oppression*, which I have not read. They insulted your scholarship, & embarrassed IEEE & my colleagues as well as me. Please forgive me. I will learn from this experience, & your book when it arrives. Sincerely, Alexander Magoun."

Noble graciously and promptly tweeted back: "Apology accepted." The mob receded. But some tweeters, admiring the new scalp dangling from the intersectional belt, couldn't resist one more swat. An anonymous professor of black studies, @wewatchwatchers, had a last word for Magoun. "I hope you learn how racist that was."

No doubt he has. ◆

COMMENT ◆ FRED BARNES

## A man with a plan: Newt's strategy for GOP victory

There are many ways Republicans can lose control of the House and Senate in November. But there's only one way they stand a good chance to hold both chambers. It's to run on the tax cuts.

One reason is that it's the best thing Republicans have done in the Trump era. But there are bigger reasons. It's a very tangible issue. That matters. Voters can see and feel the cuts. This month tens of millions of Americans will get paychecks with less withheld in income taxes. And the tax cuts will be visible each payday. Still, they'll need to be reminded who's responsible for this windfall.

The tax cuts, plus the end of burdens like the individual health insurance mandate, represent a huge shift in national policy. Companies are not only responding with bonuses and wage hikes for their employees, they're plowing billions into expansion, research, and hiring.

Then there's the opposition of Democrats. Led by House minority leader Nancy Pelosi, they've made themselves vulnerable with wild claims about how the tax cuts will enrich the wealthy and drag down the middle class. At least we've learned Pelosi is an economic illiterate.

The GOP tax cuts might appear to need no boosting in the 2018 campaign. But tax cuts can be taken for granted. Voters are often dubious about anything that comes out of Washington. And Democrats have conditioned taxpayers to think Republicans were created to reward the rich. It's in their GOP genes.

The brain behind the tax-cuts strategy is Newt Gingrich, the former House speaker. He's now a Republican strategist, adviser to GOP lead-

ers, and friend of President Trump. In a speech to the Republican National Committee, he said 50 percent of the party's effort in the midterm "should be spent on the tax cuts."

Republicans should explain the cuts and their impact "at a cultural level . . . the large economy level . . . and at a personal level," he said. This would send a simple message: "We want you to have money in your pocket, a better job, a



**The GOP tax cuts might appear to need no boosting in the 2018 campaign. But tax cuts can be taken for granted. Voters are dubious about anything that comes out of Washington.**

greater future, more money in your 401(k) for retirement. [Democrats] want all that money for their bureaucrats and their giveaways. You pick which team you like."

Gingrich does not believe "the traditional Republican party" can win this fall: "We're at an edge of a wave election, and if we end up with a wave election on their side, you can't raise enough money to win normal races."

His speech to the RNC was not Gingrich's first stab at persuading GOP leaders to emphasize their tax success. Shortly after Christmas, he privately circulated a draft plan titled "Tax Cuts and the Potential for a 2018 Realigning Election" to Republican leaders.

It used the tax cuts as the model for "a larger vision of a more successful and dynamic country" in contrast with "the big government, big bureaucracy,

high tax, low growth history of the eight Obama years.”

The five-page outline is vintage Gingrich. Rather than propose merely to stave off a massive Republican defeat in November, he insisted the Tax Cut and Job Act “is so large and has so many advantages for so many different Americans that it could be the engine that drives a realigning election.” Wow!

This may sound farfetched, but Gingrich is still remembered as the man who led Republicans out of the political wilderness in 1994 and became House speaker.

The outline was discussed by GOP leaders, congressional leaders, and administration officials. It never leaked. And if the plan or any part of it was agreed on, it wasn’t announced.

In what he called the “Newt Draft,” Gingrich cited the plan’s historic roots. “Everything outlined is as doable as the rise of supply-side economics, the Reagan Revolution, and the Contract with America campaign of 1994,” he noted. Gingrich was an active participant in those movements.

But it will need more unity, training, and organization than in 1994. The plan’s timetable saw the tax cuts as a “major component” of Trump’s State of the Union address in January. Trump did focus on them, but his assurances that winning in 2018 is in the bag didn’t increase the sense of urgency.

“Nothing outlined will happen here [in 2018] unless the President and Vice President, the Speaker of the House, the Senate Majority Leader and the Republican National Committee decide they want a realigning election,” according to Gingrich. “Muddling through, focusing on opportunistic tactics, hoping that money can replace strategy will all put the 2018 election in doubt.”

Gingrich offers a convincing kicker: “The dangers of a Speaker Pelosi and a bitterly anti-Trump Democratic majority leader should be enough to make it obvious that a Republican realigning election is much the better choice.” Should be enough, yes. But I’d go further. Newt’s on to something. ♦

COMMENT ♦ PHILIP TERZIAN

## Remember the *Pueblo*—seriously

If you should find yourself in Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea, you might be surprised to discover a U.S. naval vessel moored on the Pothong River near the Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Museum. It is the USS *Pueblo*, a modest craft launched in World War II, recommissioned by the Navy in 1966 as a spy ship, and resting in Pyongyang for the past half-century.

After the USS *Constitution* of Revolutionary War fame, the *Pueblo* is the oldest commissioned ship in the Navy. And how and why it’s in North Korea is an interesting story. Interesting, that is, partly for the reasons it’s in Pyongyang, and partly for the fact that the 50th anniversary of its seizure by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea has passed by so quietly.

From the American perspective, the *Pueblo* incident, as it quickly came to be called, occurred at the convergence of a number of delicate episodes. The *Pueblo*, on a routine mission off the North Korean coast monitoring radio transmissions, was well outside that country’s territorial waters when, on January 23, 1968, it was attacked and seized by North Korean sea and air forces.

The *Pueblo* was ill-equipped to resist, and even at the height of the Vietnam war in the near neighborhood, American forces in the western Pacific were unprepared to respond to what amounted to an act of piracy more redolent of the Barbary Wars than the mid-20th century. In the 50 years since, there has been much discussion of why the *Pueblo* came to be as vulnerable as it was; and at the time, there was heated debate about the fact that its skipper, Cdr. Lloyd

Bucher, chose to cut his losses, give up the ship, and be taken into North Korean captivity along with his 82-man crew. (One seaman had been killed in an air attack.)

In retrospect, Bucher’s decision was the right one, even a wise one, and understandable: While North Korea was, and remains, officially at war with the United States—and by extension, with the United Nations, under whose auspices the freedom and



**The memory of the sudden, dramatic seizure in 1968 of the USS *Pueblo* by North Korea’s Kim Il-sung might offer some guidance about the instincts of his grandson.**

independence of South Korea are guaranteed—there was a 15-year-old armistice in the conflict that, 65 years later, remains in place. The seizure of the *Pueblo* did not require a mass sacrifice.

The larger question is why the North Koreans chose to provoke the United States. And while the North Korean tyrant of the time, Kim Il-sung, was the grandfather of its current strongman Kim Jong-un, the memory of Kim Il-sung’s sudden, dramatic gesture might offer some guidance about the instincts of the grandson.

For just a few days before the *Pueblo* seizure, there had been an audacious—and very nearly successful—attack in Seoul by North Korean commandos aimed at the ceremonial residence of the South Korean president, Park Chung-hee. As it happened, most of the North Koreans were killed

or captured in the vicinity of the Blue House, and there were dozens of South Korean casualties, civilian and military, as well as four Americans killed at the DMZ in pursuit of fleeing commandos. But as the Duke of Wellington said of the Battle of Waterloo, by any measure the raid had been a damned close-run thing, and South Korea's Park Chung-hee, an imperious ex-general, was furious with Washington while North Korea's Kim Il-Sung was clearly feeling his oats.

Moreover, from the American standpoint, the Blue House raid could not have come at a less opportune moment. In South Vietnam, the climactic Marine battle to defend Khe Sanh along the Laotian border—with its uncomfortable echoes of the French catastrophe at Dien Bien Phu in 1954—began on the very day of the raid; and just a week after the *Pueblo* seizure, the Tet offensive commenced with a North Vietnamese assault on the old imperial capital of Hue.

As we have since been instructed, the Tet offensive was a tactical victory for American forces but a strategic defeat, inasmuch as it adversely affected public opinion—not as much

as mythology would have it but sufficiently to prompt Lyndon Johnson, two months hence, to withdraw from the 1968 presidential campaign and initiate peace talks with Hanoi.

Commander Bucher and his crew had the bad luck not only to find themselves within Kim Il-sung's grasp but to constitute an embarrassment—certainly a predicament—for the United States. Short of death, the officers and men of the *Pueblo* were subject to the worst North Korea could inflict—petty mistreatment and physical abuse, torture, public humiliation, coerced confessions—while Washington was dangerously distracted. Moreover, in the midst of a turning-point in the Vietnam war, it is no exaggeration to say that the fate of the *Pueblo* crew was not a dominant concern.

Indeed, it is difficult at this juncture to recall the extent to which antiwar sentiment in those days affected public attitudes toward the armed forces—and despite the occasional “Remember the *Pueblo*” bumper sticker and ritual mention in news reports and official statements, the crew essentially evaporated from national consciousness for the next 11 months.

When, in December 1968, North Korea concluded that it had gained all it could from high-seas piracy and hostage-keeping, and released the *Pueblo* crew, a naval court of inquiry recommended court-martial charges against Bucher and one other officer, for dereliction of duty. But in January 1969, Richard Nixon had taken office as president and his Navy secretary, John Chafee, overruled the court of inquiry, declaring that Bucher—whose behavior in captivity seems to have been exemplary—and his crew had “suffered enough.”

A half-century later, the *Pueblo* incident remains largely an artifact of its troublesome times, a source of discourse and discord among American military buffs, and a footnote to the Vietnam era. But as the *Pueblo* itself lies anchored on public display in Pyongyang, it clearly means something else to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. What does Kim Jong-un—armed with weaponry beyond the gunboats and fighter planes that subdued the *Pueblo*—think of his grandfather's daring and the relative costs of provoking America? ♦

## Worth Repeating from *WeeklyStandard.com*:

It's nearly impossible to know with precision how many pregnancies are terminated as a result of a Down syndrome diagnosis, but recent research on the U.S. population estimates that 67 percent of pregnancies diagnosed with Down end in abortion. That number is almost certainly higher in Europe.

But the politics of abortion are slowly changing. Progressives' obsession with same-sex marriage and transgender issues, as Fred Barnes documented in a 2011 *WEEKLY STANDARD* feature, allowed the pro-life movement to make quiet gains in state legislatures, and it has made impressive progress since then. As of 2017, 26 states require an ultrasound before an abortion; in 9 of those states, the abortion

provider must offer the woman seeking an abortion the opportunity to view an ultrasound image. At least 18 states ban “webcam abortions” in which the abortionist prescribes abortion-inducing pills by videoconference. Twenty-four states ban abortions after a certain number of weeks (typically 20 weeks, when the unborn can feel pain).

In December, Gov. John Kasich of Ohio signed a law prohibiting doctors from aborting babies based on a Down syndrome diagnosis. What was surprising about the Ohio debate was how comparatively quiet it was. The pro-choice crowd lodged its usual objections, but the law went into effect without much of the alarmism we've come to expect in these debates.'

—The Editors, *Lucas Warren Reminds Us of Life*'

# Him Too?

## French and Swiss women denounce Tariq Ramadan. BY DOMINIC GREEN

It was a Frenchman who gave his surname to the term *chauvinism*, and it was a Frenchman, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, whose prosecution for sexually assaulting a hotel maid in New York in 2011 now looks like the earliest tremor of the #MeToo movement.

In mid-October, as the Weinstein affair was breaking over here, the journalist Sandra Muller called French women to the barricades under their own hashtag: *#balancetonporc*, or “Denounce your pig.” Yet the first major figure to be caught in its net was not a Frenchman—if only because his application for citizenship had recently been rejected by the French government.

In late October, Henda Ayari, a Salafist turned feminist, accused the Swiss-born political philosopher Tariq Ramadan of having raped her in a Paris hotel room in 2012. Almost immediately followed “Christelle,” a disabled convert to Islam who remains anonymous, claiming Ramadan beat and raped her in Lyon in 2009. “Yasmina” came next, adding that Ramadan had harassed her with “pornographic” messages and then blackmailed her into silence. Four Swiss women announced that Ramadan had harassed them when they were his students in the late 1980s and early 1990s. One of them claimed Ramadan had coerced her into sex when she was under the age of consent. On February 2, a Paris court charged Ramadan with two counts of rape.

Tariq Ramadan is a much more important figure than Harvey Weinstein, Woody Allen, or Matt Lauer.

*Dominic Green, a fellow of the Royal Historical Society, is a frequent contributor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD.*

He is not just an Oxford professor and sought-after lecturer and talking head. He is an adviser to governments and the most visible proselytizer for radical European Islam. Since the early 1990s, he has positioned himself as



Tariq Ramadan

a one-man peacekeeping force in the clash of civilizations, performing a kind of shuttle diplomacy between Western liberalism and Islamism.

As the grandson of Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Ramadan possesses hereditary legitimacy. He is a prince of Islamism. But, born and educated in multilingual Geneva, he is also a European. He trims his beard short and wears Armani suits. He fluently discusses the crisis of Christianity in Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche. He speaks the language of natural rights and citizenship and insists that Europe’s secular universalism is compatible with the theological universalism of Islamic tradition.

The tensions and contradictions in Ramadan’s public persona are more than philosophical. He has counseled Tony Blair and the European Union on the harmony of Islamic

and Western values. But he aligns Islam with “resistance”—with anti-capitalism, anti-Americanism, and anti-Zionism, a message that has long endeared him to the French left.

In 1995, he was temporarily banned from traveling to France because of his associations with Algerian terrorists. He is currently banned from Tunisia, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Israel. He is not especially welcome in the United States, either. In 2004, he was unable to take up a professorship at Notre Dame because the Department of Homeland Security revoked his work-visa due to his donations to a pro-Hamas charity.

Ramadan’s online life reflects his strained medley of Sixties radicalism and Salafist tradition, something he calls “Islamic socialism.” On his website, endorsements of Norman Finkelstein and Glenn Greenwald mingle with screeds claiming that racism is “a synonym for Zionism” and requests that “sisters in humanity of ALL faiths/backgrounds” should “wear the hijab in solidarity with Muslim women around the world” on World Hijab Day.

According to the account “Christelle” gave French *Vanity Fair*, Ramadan’s digital life also includes romance. Their relationship began when she wrote to him for religious advice in April 2009, and he pursued her by Skype and cell phone.

Ramadan claims that he is not a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, even though his grandfather founded it, his father brought it to Europe, and his brother Hani is an imam in Geneva who preaches the stoning of female adulterers, the wickedness of homosexuality, and the idea that 9/11 was an inside job. “Christelle” says Ramadan asked her to read his grandfather’s *Fifty Point Manifesto*, the founding document of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Ramadan also denies that he is a conduit for terrorist recruitment, but his romantic patter to “Christelle” included sweet nothings like “Are you ready to fight for Allah, and for your brothers and sisters in Palestine?”

By September 2009, Ramadan, a

MEHDI FEDOUACH / AFP / GETTY

father of four, was telling her that he was “factually unmarried” and wanted her to live with him in London, where she could look after his children. His knowledge of Islam, moreover, permitted him to enact a “temporary marriage” over Skype, he promised.

Some weeks later Ramadan was in Lyon to speak at a conference. They met in a hotel for coffee, she alleges. Ramadan said he wanted privacy and suggested they go to his room. She agreed and her complaint to the police describes what she says followed: “blows to the face and body, forced sodomy, violation with an object and various humiliations, including being dragged by the hair to the bathtub and urinated upon.” According to *Vanity Fair*’s Marion van Renterghem, a photograph taken immediately afterwards shows an “unrecognizable” “Christelle”: “Her swollen face has doubled in volume.”

In her testimony to a panel of judges in Paris, “Christelle” noted that Ramadan has a small scar on his groin that can only be seen at close quarters. In the judicial interrogation last week, Ramadan admitted to having such a scar.

The French press, citing unknown “sources,” claim that other women who spoke to police during the three-month investigation may also file rape charges.

“I have been silent for several years because of fear,” Henda Ayari wrote on her Facebook page. “He did not hesitate to threaten me and tell me that they could also go after my children.” She has received death threats and is under police protection. “Christelle” is afraid to be identified. “If you saw the fundamentalist imam that the young men in my neighborhood worship, you’d understand why I don’t really want to show my face. I’m not afraid of Tariq Ramadan, but of Ramadanists, completely lobotomized and convinced of doing right. They could stick a knife in me in the name of Allah.”

**I**t would be a mistake to rush to judgment. As Ramadan said of Osama bin Laden a few days after 9/11, “The probability of his

guilt is large, but some questions remain unanswered.”

Some of Ramadan’s supporters claim that the charges are all part of a Zionist conspiracy. He has rarely been so explicit, though he did accuse several “French Jewish intellectuals,” one of whom was not Jewish at all, of betraying “universalist” French values by supporting Israel in 2003. In *Islam: The Essentials* (2017), Ramadan claimed that “the media” are out to get him because he is a “Muslim intellectual,” without specifying who drives their “dubious agendas and objectives.” An Islamist lobbying

**‘Christelle,’ one of Ramadan’s accusers, agreed to accompany him to his Lyon hotel room, and her complaint to police describes what she says followed: ‘blows to the face and body, forced sodomy, violation with an object and various humiliations, including being dragged by the hair to the bathtub and urinated upon.’**

group, Resistance and Alternative, has been set up to defend him against the “smear campaign.”

And there have been public smears against his accusers. Writing in the *New Yorker*, Adam Shatz described Henda Ayari as “something of a heroine in the extreme-right circles of the *fachosphere*, where Islamophobia is a ticket of admission”—the implication being that Ayari is untrustworthy and a malicious accuser, and anyone alarmed by the advance of Islamism in Europe is a neofascist. The satirical paper *Charlie Hebdo*, though, at least weighed in with a cartoon in which Ramadan, an erection visible through his pants, calls himself the “sixth pillar of Islam.”

Who knew? That is the question that is roiling Paris. In 2016, Ayari described her rape by a charismatic

and popular Islamist in a memoir. Manuel Valls, the center-left and anti-Islamist ex-prime minister, has accused one of Ramadan’s supporters, the Trotskyite former editor of *Le Monde* Edwy Plenel, of knowing about the allegations and not investigating them. Bernard Godard, who worked for Valls in the interior ministry, has said that he had heard similar allegations against Ramadan.

“For more than five years,” the feminist Souad Betka wrote, “numerous militant Muslim activists of my acquaintance have testified to me that they have been the victim of insults, manipulation, and sexual harassment by that man.” Muslim and anti-racist groups, Betka alleged, did not pursue these claims because they assumed they were conspiracies and would fan “Islamophobic” sentiment.

“A number of associates who were very close to him were aware of his sexual escapades, and they protected him,” Omero Marongui-Perria, sociologist and ex-member of the Muslim Brotherhood, told *Le Parisien*. “They even criticized people who denounced the preacher’s contradictions. A priori—but here I use the conditional—some of his relatives would also have known of his violent behavior in the private sphere towards women. If this allegation is proven—I take every precaution—it is obviously more serious. There are people who make religion into a real business, and who are now in a logical bind.”

The topic of Islam in Europe is so charged, and Ramadan so loathed or cherished for identifying himself with it, that his private motives were a matter of public speculation and political opportunism long before Ayari accused him of rape. Ramadan’s defense against the charges of being a fork-tongued fundamentalist—speaking one language in public and another in private—has always been that his character is as ethically consistent as his philosophical statements. He made himself into a test case. Now his character is on trial and, along with it, the characters of his Islamist associates and his left-wing supporters. ♦

# Irrationalism in Politics

Now more than ever.

BY JAMES W. CEASER



Protest at the White House, August 14, 2017

It has been over a half-century since the heralded British political theorist Michael Oakeshott published his most acclaimed work, *Rationalism in Politics*. Oakeshott put forward the thesis that since the 18th century the culture and politics of the West have come to operate under the sway of a rational mode of thinking, one in which people think of themselves as the “enemy of authority, of prejudice, of the merely traditional.” Not old parchments or myth or the supposed wisdom of ancestors supplies the foundation of rule, but a modern understanding of reason. To Oakeshott, this modern view of reason was unreasonable, promoting an ideological approach to the political world rather than a sensible immersion in a nation’s own practices. Reason’s

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growing authority was nevertheless the cardinal fact of our age.

At the forefront in embracing reason were the Americans, who drew their thinking from the realm of philosophy in the form of natural rights and who, perhaps for the first time, brought theory openly into the political realm as the basis of a new nation. None of this meant, however, that the rise of reason would go unchallenged. In America, after the acceptance of the Declaration, the authors of *The Federalist* were already worried during the debate over ratifying the Constitution about “passions and prejudices little favorable to the discovery of truth.” In the Jacksonian era, observers like Alexis de Tocqueville charged that the new mass presidential campaigns brought rabble-rousing and demagoguery into presidential politics and encouraged an incumbent to “prostrate himself before the majority and . . . run to meet its caprices.”

All of the new communications technologies that came along were greeted with expectations that they would boost rational discussion, only to be subsequently condemned for corrupting the public mind. Newspapers, which Thomas Jefferson initially lauded and helped to fund, came eventually under his attack: “the man who never looks into a newspaper is better informed than he who reads them; inasmuch as he who knows nothing is nearer to truth than he whose mind is filled with falsehoods & errors.”

Film entered the scene, enabling average Americans for the first time to see their leaders, but this medium, as its use during World War I showed, could be an instrument of mass government propaganda. Electronic media followed, first radio and then television. TV allowed people to see and hear their leaders in real time, which promised to favor reasonable dialogue. Yet it produced three network news giants that pompously celebrated themselves as representatives of an objective “fourth estate,” which often subtly supported one side.

In our day we have experienced the rise of social media, which is rewriting every aspect of political communications. One of its forms, Twitter, now seems to account for half of every news program, with experienced reporters reading out the day’s rantings, insults, rumors, and boasts. The place of this medium in presidential communication, one already forgets, began only recently. At 8:38 A.M. on May 15, 2015, Barack Obama surprised internauts with the first presidential tweet, replete with the usual overuse of the exclamation point: “Hello, Twitter! It’s Barack. Really!” The White House later promised that @POTUS would afford Barack a “new way to engage directly with the American people, with tweets coming exclusively from him.” Here was another promise of more intelligent dialogue.

Up perhaps to very end, reason was arguably still strengthening its claim over political life. For all of the problems that were encountered, more

MARK WILSON / GETTY

and more real information was still being made available, at times perhaps too much for people to digest. Americans came to rely on intellectual commentators who helped served as gatekeepers to the political world. These authorities disagreed and quarreled, but they usually made an effort to persuade those who were not on their side.

We have now entered a new universe. Looking back, some may detect the turning point in the 2008 presidential campaign, when panting acolytes of Barack Obama swooned before his phantasmagoric paeans to “hope and change” uttered in front of faux Greek columns. People were asked to accept this display, just as they were soon told to swallow the absurdity of the new president’s Nobel Peace Prize. Had the modern democratic world lost its connection to reason?

Yet nothing prepared the scene for the revolutionary shift that began in the last presidential campaign. Rationalism was shown the door, as Donald Trump turned the Republican presidential primary contest into a food fight. “Reasonable” dialogue has since completely collapsed, with Democrats now joining in to make reciprocal charges against the president. Every insult imaginable has been deployed, from the president’s accusations of treason against those who will not applaud him to his opponents’ charge of mental incompetence. Politics of this kind has become the new normal.

This situation has brought the decline of rationalism as the commonly accepted authority in our society. The end of rationalism is best seen not in the expression of strongly conflicting views but in the abandonment of the idea that one’s opponents can ever be persuaded by a rational argument. The effort would be futile. Pick up a newspaper, and it is becoming clearer by the day that more and more of our commentators have abandoned even the pretense of addressing a general readership. They speak only to those who share their views, as if this is now their accepted function.

It is a mistake, however, to think that this new stage means that people have lost all capacity to act, after a fashion, in a rational way. The two sides today are rational for themselves even as they have lost all faith in the authority of reason in society at large.

Trump supporters, contrary to what most of their opponents believe, are by and large not the dupes of the president’s hyperboles, untruths, and extravagances. Most of them have one or two big reasons for backing Trump, which may be their economic plight, their opposition to political correctness, or their opposition to illegal immigration. As for everything else Trump says and does, many ignore these matters and go about their business; some approve of his behavior as a fighter willing to take on the enemy, or see it as form of entertainment, in the fashion of a professional wrestler who provokes and taunts his foes; and, finally, others, while wishing that he would act more presidential, are not yet willing for this reason to jump ship.

Trump opponents who total up each and every instance of outlandish behavior miss the logic of his support. Yet they are likewise in their own way acting rationally. They despise him to the core and then some, as his provocations against them multiply. Their

objective is to get him out and meanwhile to resist everything he does. Accepting him as president is by now an impossibility. With this in mind, they often distort facts, exaggerate, and present his deeds and words in the darkest light possible.

Who are those today who cling stubbornly to the authority of reason? Very few, surprisingly, come from among Democrats. Satisfied in their self-righteousness and convinced of their moral rectitude, Democratic commentators and politicians, joined by some ex-Republicans, spend much of their time acting as scorekeepers, castigating those who support Trump, praising those who take stands against him, and withholding judgment of those who have not come along far enough but may still do so. Because their candidate was defeated in the last election, Democrats have the luxury of not having to answer for how much illegality and corruption they would be willing to countenance in a leader. This leaves a smaller group of Republicans and ex-Republicans who are struggling to defend reason in a world where few care genuinely about it. These lonely souls are left to wander at the edge of the political scene, hoping their exile will last not forty years but four. ♦

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# Unwarranted Influence

## The Memo and the Fourth Amendment.

BY ERIC FELTEN

When the House Intelligence Committee released its memo arguing that the FBI and Department of Justice had abused the U.S. Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court by using political opposition research as a basis for repeated surveillance requests, James Comey expressed perfectly the inconsistent response of the anti-memo crowd: “That’s it?” the former FBI director tweeted. “Dishonest and misleading memo wrecked the House intel committee, destroyed trust with Intelligence Community, damaged relationship with FISA court, and inexcusably exposed classified investigation of an American citizen. For what?”

That’s an awful lot of carnage caused by a munition that was said to have fizzled.

When they weren’t dismissing the memo as a “nothing-burger,” Democrats denounced it, in the words of Adam Schiff, the committee’s ranking minority member, as “a political hit job on the FBI in service of the president.”

So which was it—strong poison or weak tea? Neither and both: It was strong stuff, the impact of which was weakened by the fact that (1) there is much we still don’t know about the case for surveilling onetime Trump campaign adviser Carter Page and (2) many of the most dramatic details had already been revealed piecemeal. For instance, we already knew that Hillary Clinton’s campaign and the Democratic National Committee had paid for the opposition research referred to in the FISA warrant applications—a series of memos produced in the

summer and fall of 2016 by Christopher Steele, a retired British spy. That made headlines last October.

It’s a measure of how little new information was in The Memo that serious students of the Steele-dossier saga were muted in response to its release. Bret Baier of Fox News adopted a skeptical and challenging tone in his interview with House Intel chairman Devin Nunes. Kimberley Strassel of the *Wall Street Journal* was left guessing among several scandalous scenarios the memo suggested: “The FBI got fooled by a source, or it knew its source was lying, or it didn’t bother to check, or it was too incompetent to see the obvious.” For the memo to have been a bombshell, it would need to have proved one of these egregious possibilities.

Of all the commentary surrounding The Memo, perhaps the most interesting was offered a couple of days before the document dropped. Writing at the *Lawfare* blog, University of Southern California law professor Orin Kerr, a Fourth Amendment scholar, made the subtle, sophisticated, and just a bit cynical argument that it wouldn’t matter if the FBI relied on biased, dubious information in its FISA warrant applications because courts routinely rely on biased, dubious information in warrant applications.

Kerr pointed to *Franks v. Delaware* (1978) as establishing that a court is obliged to void a search or surveillance warrant based on information police knew or should have known was false. But in practice, “judges figure that *of course* informants are often biased,” Kerr wrote. “Informants usually have ulterior motives, and judges don’t need to be told that.”

Stephen Schulhofer, a professor of law at New York University and author of the Fourth Amendment manifesto *More Essential Than Ever*, allows that Kerr is right that “courts *always* accept warrants based on information from clearly biased sources.” Indeed, says Schulhofer, “information included in warrant applications *typically* comes from biased sources.” But recognizing the skewed and self-serving nature of such sources, “the law requires that informant tips be buttressed by some indicia of reliability.”

Which brings us to the sometime spy Christopher Steele: Were his informants reliable? Long after the FISA warrants were obtained, former FBI director Comey acknowledged in testimony to the Senate Intelligence Committee that the Steele dossier contained “salacious and unverified” material. And the fact that Steele was being paid to deliver oppo research might naturally call into question the dirt he was peddling. Still, it seems the bar for establishing reliability is awfully low—so low that verifying some small part of the material Steele had collected would be enough for a warrant application to be able to skip altogether the awkward fact that Clinton cash was involved: “If the government looked into the Steele memorandum and corroborated some of its claims,” Kerr wrote, “it undercuts the need to disclose the funding source.”

Also arguing in favor of Steele’s credibility—and thus against a requirement that it be revealed in a warrant application precisely who was paying him—is his status as “a former MI6 intelligence officer and Russia expert,” Kerr argued. “Maybe the key allegations are totally wrong. But if you’re trying to argue that Steele’s funding sources ruin the credibility of his research, his professional training and background make that an uphill battle.”

*National Review*’s Andrew C. McCarthy challenged that argument, saying that the only credibility that counted was not Steele’s, but that of his sources, about whom we know nothing. “Steele is not the source of

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the information,” wrote McCarthy. “For purposes of the warrant application, he is the purveyor of information from other sources.” And those sources are a gaggle of anonymous (we could say “shadowy” if we want to accentuate the menace in the narrative) Russians of unknown credibility and questionable motives.

Kerr responded with a tweet-storm of arguments meant to rebut McCarthy. Among the reasons he offered, the truest to his original case against The Memo was this: The “fact that the Steele dossier relied on double hearsay is obvious from the nature of the report and already factored in by anyone trying to assess its credibility.” That may well be true, but it doesn’t exactly inspire confidence in the safeguards against unfair, intrusive surveillance of U.S. citizens.

Former D.C. Superior Court judge Stuart Nash agrees with Kerr that based on the information that has been disclosed to date, the warrants for surveilling Carter Page are unlikely to be invalidated. But he says that doesn’t mean the Department of Justice and FBI were right to have sought the warrants in the first place. “In almost every context, the judicial system relies on the adversarial process to restrain excesses,” Nash says.

But there is no adversarial process in the FISA court. After all, its domain is not criminal investigations but surveillance of suspected spies. So attorneys at Justice who prepare the warrant applications and the FISA judges who rule on them (federal judges who are assigned this duty by the chief justice) have tried to protect the process from any suggestion of overreaching or unfairness. “They have typically held themselves to a higher standard, to guard against the contention that the FISA court, operating in secret, is a rubber stamp for whatever the government wants to do,” says Nash. He cautions that unless and until the actual warrant applications for Carter Page

are declassified, it will be impossible to know whether DoJ or the FBI were pushing the envelope.

While Page had resigned from the Trump campaign team before the FBI began its surveillance, it would be an outrage if judicial decision-making were influenced even in part by the partisan tactics of rival presidential campaigns. In surveillance cases, it’s not unreasonable to expect a higher standard of probable cause than that demanded of local cops looking for a



**Mueller has a stake in ferreting out misconduct at the FBI—which, he said not long ago, has ‘to focus on credibility, because it affects people’s lives here in the United States.’ He may be in a prime position to judge whether anyone at the FBI or DoJ has abused the FISA process.**

warrant to raid a neighborhood meth lab. Schulhofer maintains there are such standards: “Courts are generally strict in judging probable cause to authorize warrants for electronic surveillance of targeted individuals,” he says, and “the FISA court is especially strict in this regard.”

Case law may indeed allow officers to use all sorts of dubious, third-hand scuttlebutt to secure warrants, but should it? “It is very important that the government be straightforward with judges about what they know about a source’s bias,” says Timothy Edgar, Brown University senior fellow and author of *Beyond Snowden: Privacy, Mass Surveillance, and the Struggle to Reform the NSA*. “The allegation in the Nunes memo is that they were not in this case. There are special problems with the FISA

process, which make the allegations more troubling.” We won’t know how troubling until we actually see the Carter Page FISA application, Edgar says, “including what other information was included to support the finding of probable cause.”

Even if we learn that the FBI did mislead the FISA court about Steele and his dossier, that doesn’t mean Robert Mueller’s investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election is tainted. Those warrant applications began before Mueller was named special counsel. They targeted a former adviser to the Trump campaign, not the campaign organization or candidate himself. But Mueller has a stake in ferreting out misconduct at the bureau. In an interview a few years ago for a book on the FBI and CIA, *The Threat Matrix*, Robert Mueller told author Garrett Graff that the FBI had to be fastidious and trustworthy in how it shares information. The bureau had “to focus on credibility,” Mueller said, “because it affects people’s lives here in the United States.” Mueller may be in a prime position to judge whether anyone at the FBI or DoJ has abused the FISA process.

There’s also a role for the judges of the Federal Intelligence Surveillance Court. Royce Lamberth, the presiding judge of the FISC from 1995 to 2002, once described the job as making sure “there’s no political shenanigans going on here.” He went so far as to impose a career-crippling banishment of one agent he believed had been playing fast and loose: “We sent a message to the FBI: You’ve got to tell the truth,” Lamberth said.

In a way, Orin Kerr’s argument is compelling: The House Intel Committee memo’s assertion that the FISA court was misled might indeed be a nonstarter under the bottom-scraping standards commonplace in criminal cases. But in the extraordinary context of counterintelligence surveillance of political figures, one would hope for standards more exacting than business as usual. ♦

THOMAS FLUHARTY



At the White House, November 10, 2016

# The Obama-Trump Foreign Policy

Retreat is not a strategy.

BY THOMAS DONNELLY & WILLIAM KRISTOL

It is a conceit of the Trump administration that its foreign policy is entirely different from that of Barack Obama. Even in an otherwise conciliatory State of the Union address, Trump strove to set himself apart from Obama, touting his own policy of “maximum pressure” on North Korea as an example of how he would not “repeat the mistakes of past administrations.” Similarly, Trump has made a point of contrasting his support for the anti-regime demonstrators in Iran with Obama’s silence amid the Green Movement protests there in 2009.

For their part, Obama-era officials agree. The stakes, according to former national security adviser Susan Rice, could not be greater: “What’s been

happening is not that the administration is undoing President Obama’s legacy; it’s undoing American leadership on the international stage.” During the 2016 campaign, Obama warned that if Trump were elected, “all the progress we’ve made over the past eight years goes out the window.” Thus most of the advice on Iran from former Obama aides has been to stay quiet as Obama did and, above all, to preserve his nuclear deal.

But the contrast between the foreign policies of Obama and Trump may be more a matter of style than substance. Don’t they stand together in sharing a weariness with the burdens of global leadership that is bipartisan, even generational? If one steps back and looks at American foreign policy from the midpoint of Obama’s first term until now, there is more continuity than change. Trump speaks in the voice of the deplorables, Obama in the voice of the deploring,

but the messages are similar: America must learn to step back from its previous global responsibilities.

It also seems likely that this view could prevail past Trump’s presidency. For now at least it’s hard to imagine an insurgent Republican unseating Trump and, at any rate, the party as a whole shows little of its old peace-through-strength Reaganite spirit. As for the Democrats . . . well, Bernie Sanders is no Harry Truman. Nor is Elizabeth Warren, Cory Booker, Kamala Harris—or probably (alas!) even Oprah.

What underlies the strategic thinking of both Barack Obama and Donald Trump—if it is strategic thinking—is the primacy of domestic over foreign affairs. In 2011, Obama rationalized his decision to wind down the surge of U.S. forces to Afghanistan not only by asserting that “the tide of war is receding” but by arguing that “it is time to focus on nation-building here at home.” And when Donald Trump rolled out his formal national security strategy in December, he argued similarly that past presidents “engaged in nation-building abroad while they failed to build up and replenish our nation at home.” Like Obama, he emphasized domestic prosperity before international security. In their very different ways, both men are “America First” presidents.

Connected to the praise of attending to matters at home are second thoughts about the American habit of promoting liberalization abroad. Indeed the Obama-Trump consensus doubts the very legitimacy of that project, asking not about the use of American power for a common political good but “What’s in it for us?” Trump is characteristically blunt: “We can no longer . . . enter into a one-sided deal where the United States gets nothing in return.” He said that “his instinct” told him to remove U.S. forces from Afghanistan; in acceding to the recommendations of his national security advisers to keep some troops there, Trump insisted that the mission was restricted to “killing terrorists” and excluded any “nation building.”

JIM WATSON / AFP / GETTY

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Obama phrased his doubts in a more nuanced way. In his extended interviews with Jeffrey Goldberg of the *Atlantic*, he allowed that he was willing to “do good,” but only at a “bearable cost.” But for Obama, very few costs were bearable. He emphasized the cost of remaining in Iraq, of sustaining the surge in Afghanistan, of toppling the Assad regime, of sticking with Libya after removing Muammar Qaddafi, of defending Ukraine against Russian invasion, of asserting “freedom of navigation” in the South China Sea. The costs were always too great.

The world has noticed. In the 1990s, other nations fretted about alleged post-Cold-War excesses of American power—*hyperpuissance*, as the French dubbed it. Since 2010, the growing worry of allies and the cheering realization for adversaries is that the United States has turned inward and no longer possesses the political will and military might to maintain a global order.

Obama’s recalibration of American commitment and Trump’s confirmation of it are most evident in two Defense Department statements of strategy, the 2012 Defense Planning Guidance and the recently released National Defense Strategy. It is easy to overlook and even to lampoon these documents as rote bureaucratic exercises, but they provide the template that reckons the basic size and structure of the U.S. military. And despite the current mania for emphasizing “all elements of national power,” it remains true that military means are the principal determinant in geopolitics and the global balance of power.

In his 2012 “guidance,” Barack Obama stepped back from the benchmark of U.S. military sufficiency that had been operative since the end of the Cold War. That standard, enunciated in the Clinton administration’s 1993 Bottom-Up Review, declared that American forces must be able to fight and win two “major regional

contingencies”—adversaries on the scale of Saddam Hussein’s Iraq and North Korea—at the same time. This was essential, wrote Defense Secretary Les Aspin, lest a “potential adversary in one region [is] tempted to take advantage if we are already engaged . . . in another.” The two-war standard also provided a “hedge against the possibility that a future aggressor might one day confront us with a larger-than-expected threat.”

For a nation with vital regional security interests in Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia—and, even more important, for the guarantor of a systemic global liberal order—the logic of this was inescapable. Indeed, the requirement to operate in multiple theaters had been acknowledged since the Vinson-Walsh Two-Ocean Navy Act passed in 1940, on the eve of World War II.

Obama’s “planning guidance”—the White House trumpeted the president’s role in the writing of the document, and he took the lead at the Pentagon

## Protect IP to Maintain Economic Success

**THOMAS J. DONOHUE**  
PRESIDENT AND CEO  
U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

With many countries around the world experiencing promising economic gains, 2018 is an excellent time to strengthen policies that will spur the creativity and innovation necessary for long-term success. One powerful way to do so is by shoring up protections for intellectual property (IP) around the globe. By ensuring that those who conceive an idea reap the rewards of its success, governments can incentivize their citizens to develop innovations that lead to economic growth and job creation.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s Global Innovation Policy Center (GIPC) laid out a roadmap to help governments foster innovation and IP. Protecting IP requires teamwork on a global scale. In our digital economy, if a song, movie, or piece of software created in America can be offered online for free in another country, then

it can be downloaded illegally all over the world. As part of our efforts to help countries improve their IP laws, GIPC just released its annual *International IP Index* ranking 50 countries on specific IP measures. Consider this a report card of what each country is doing and can do to attract innovation and foster creative industries.

Overall, the report brought good news. The U.S., U.K., and EU led the *Index*, with the U.S. and U.K. standing side by side as global leaders in IP protection and enforcement. Further, the majority of economies took positive steps to strengthen their IP laws. Courts in major markets like Australia and the EU took steps to block pirated material. Several countries, including Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam, invested in long-standing programs to enhance coordination among government agencies responsible for IP enforcement.

Nonetheless, IP-intensive industries continue to face significant market access barriers in key economies

worldwide. Even in the U.S., the results were mixed—with significant steps forward in some areas and steps back in others. For example, while our nation strengthened border enforcement efforts to help stop counterfeit goods, the standards governing patent laws continued to create uncertainty for rights holders.

All countries have room for improvement in strengthening their IP laws. And they have much to gain by doing so. The strength of IP laws in a country strongly correlates to innovation, access to new products, and job creation in the knowledge-intensive industries that are increasingly critical to prosperous 21st century economies. To foster this growth and job creation and protect the fruits of American creativity, the Chamber will continue fighting for stronger IP protections at home and around the world.



Learn more at  
[uschamber.com/abovethefold](https://www.uschamber.com/abovethefold).

rollout—junked all that, intentionally. “Our planning,” he wrote, “envisages forces that are able to fully deny a capable state’s aggressive objectives in one region.” When it came to “an opportunistic aggressor in a second region,” it was deemed sufficient to “impose unacceptable costs.” Defeat the first, merely punish the second.

In addition, Obama announced a narrowing of strategic focus by “rebalancing toward the Asia-Pacific.” He concluded that European countries—Russia’s invasion of Georgia in 2008 notwithstanding—had become “producers of security rather than consumers of it. Combined with the drawdown in Iraq and Afghanistan, this has created a strategic opportunity to rebalance the U.S. military posture.” In other words, the Asia-Pacific region was the only big prize worth fighting for, and punitive measures would have to suffice elsewhere.

Remarkably, and especially so given the central role played by Defense secretary James Mattis, who while in uniform lived with the consequences of Obama-era force cuts, the just-released defense strategy essentially retains this one-war construct. Here is the money quotation: Even when “fully mobilized,” U.S. forces “will be capable of: defeating aggression by a major power [while] deterring opportunistic aggression elsewhere and disrupting imminent terrorist and [weapons of mass destruction] threats.” To its credit, the Trump administration recognizes that China and Russia represent “great-power competitors,” more threatening than regional warlords of the Saddam variety. But that simply underscores the risks exposed under “second-war” conditions: While the United States is defeating great power number one, it will be hard-pressed to restrain great power number two—a more capable “revisionist power” desiring, in the strategy’s assessment, not just regional hegemony but “to shape a world consistent with their authoritarian [political] model.”

Thus the Trump corollary to the doctrine he shares with his predecessor is simultaneously more realistic (replacing Obama’s visions of

international harmony with a recognition of the competitive nature of power politics) and more risky (hoping that it can keep a second very powerful and ideologically motivated adversary at bay while dealing with the aggression of another). Yet the underlying view remains in place: that restoring the “post-World War II international order” might be beyond America’s grasp.

The Obama-Trump consensus is leading to a more dangerous world. It is also redefining what it means to be the United States. We are a nation built on expansion—not just territorial and geopolitical expansion but the expansion of liberty and prosperity. The United States exists not merely to defend what is but to realize what can be. Our intent, as Thomas Jefferson and James Madison described it, was to create an “empire for liberty.”

Donald Trump speaks of greatness, but it was the commitment to an empire for liberty that made America great. The pursuit of power was not an end in itself—though the Founders were entirely “realistic” in their understanding of the importance of power in international politics—it was for the sake of spreading “liberty and justice for all.”

Our “consensus” politicians cringe lest they repeat the seeming mistakes of the recent past. (“No boots on the ground! This is for the Iranians/Iraqis/Ukrainians/Yugoslavs/Chinese to decide themselves!”) In their timidity, both Obama and Trump not only renounce our past but fail to secure the present and to shape the future. In their shortsightedness, they walk away from the promise of an “empire for liberty” that is at the heart of the American experiment. ♦

## A Different Kind of Republican

Matt Gaetz wants you to know that he is more than a one-dimensional Trump apologist. **BY HALEY BYRD**

When Matt Gaetz came to Washington last year, he could easily have been mistaken for the typical freshman member of Congress. The Capitol Hill newspaper *Roll Call* ran a short profile of him under the headline “The Least Interesting (Fresh) Man in the House.”

But the Florida Republican proved to be anything but that.

Gaetz has made a name for himself in front of the television cameras by leading the charge against special counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation and by calling for new inquiries into Hillary Clinton and the Obama administration. He’s been willing to defend

Trump with vigor and pal around with some of the most unsavory characters on the right, including white nationalists and conspiracy theorists.

Gaetz is the son of a wealthy and influential former Florida state senator. A native of Hollywood, Florida, just north of Miami, he studied at Florida State University before moving on to law school at William & Mary. After graduating in 2007, he spent a couple of years working as an attorney in Fort Walton Beach in the state’s Panhandle. Gaetz won a seat in the Florida house of representatives in 2010 and in 2016 ran for Florida’s 1st Congressional District—the most Republican district in the state. He won with 69 percent of the vote, promising to defend gun rights and push for fiscal responsibility.

*Haley Byrd is a reporter at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.*

Since entering Congress, the unmarried 35-year-old has positioned himself as a Trump Republican and a critic of the House GOP leadership. He says his top priorities for 2018 are “rebuilding our military and protecting Florida from the dangers of offshore oil drilling.”

If we had power rankings of congressional Republicans who carry water for Trump, Gaetz would undoubtedly earn a spot alongside the likes of House Intelligence Committee chairman Devin Nunes, Freedom Caucus chairman Mark Meadows, and Senate immigration hawks such as Tom Cotton and David Perdue. Yet Gaetz rejects his portrayal as one-dimensional Trump apologist.

“I’m made out as an uncritical cheerleader for the Trump administration, and that isn’t true,” he says, pointing to several areas of disagreement with the White House, such as the wide ideological rift between himself and Trump’s attorney general, Jeff Sessions, over medical marijuana. Gaetz has also called on Trump to release his tax returns.

But the Florida Republican makes frequent appearances on cable news shows, and watching him, it’s difficult to think he has more than one viewer in mind. When talking about the Russia investigation, the FBI, or the Justice Department, he says exactly what Trump wants to hear—that Trump is “getting a raw deal.”

And the president has taken notice. Trump frequently calls Gaetz to talk after seeing him on TV, the lawmaker tells me. “One time he said, ‘Good morning, Matt. It’s your favorite president,’” Gaetz recalls of a recent phone call from Trump. He refuses to say just how many times Trump has called him after seeing him on the cable shows, but he admits it’s “often.”

Gaetz is a particular favorite of Fox News, but he is not picky about which outlets he goes on—though he says he turned down *Russia Today*. His affinity for the cameras is atypical of a first-term House member, most of whom avoid the press almost religiously. Gaetz said he tried to keep a low profile as he was getting used to the place,

but, at some point, he couldn’t help but embrace the spotlight.

“You hear all the talk that freshmen congressmen are supposed to be seen not heard,” Gaetz’s younger sister, Erin, tells me. “But Matt’s not the type to go stare at his nameplate for two years.”

His pivot-to-video came from a growing frustration at listening to House Democrats talk about the Russia investigation during committee hearings. “I believe there was Russian intervention for the purpose of hurting Donald Trump,” he says

Judiciary Committee hearings, aiming to deflect Democratic questions about Russian intervention in the 2016 election with their own questions about the Uranium One deal and Hillary Clinton’s tenure as secretary of state.

In January, Gaetz and Jordan jumped on the counter-narrative provided by the Devin Nunes memo alleging improprieties within the FBI. Gaetz bombarded the airwaves to hype the implications of the document for weeks before it was released on February 2. “The facts contained in this



*Gaetz takes a selfie with Trump after the State of the Union address, January 30.*

of the investigations into Russian involvement in the 2016 election. “I believe that in elections all over the world, Russians, Ukrainians, Chinese, and at times Americans are engaged on all sides.”

Gaetz says he’s “not much for playing defense.” That’s why he turned to fellow House Judiciary Committee member Jim Jordan (R-Ohio) for help plotting a path forward. Jordan, a founding member of the House Freedom Caucus, shares Gaetz’s bombastic, Trump-friendly stance and has a similar fondness for the cameras.

Gaetz was in the Atlanta airport last summer when he thought of Jordan—“He’s got a good amount of fight in him”—and gave the Ohio Republican a call to suggest they attempt to take back the narrative. Jordan says the call began a friendship. The pair adopted a forward-leaning strategy during

memo are jaw-dropping,” Gaetz said in a statement. His crusade, largely seen as an effort to undermine the Russia investigation, has won him celebrity status with the alt-right.

This status was further cemented when Gaetz invited the alt-right race-baiter Charles C. Johnson to the State of the Union. Johnson has lately been roiled in controversy for questioning the number of Jews killed during the Holocaust in a post on Reddit: “I do not and never have believed the six million figure,” he wrote. “I think the Red Cross numbers of 250,000 dead in the camps from typhus are more realistic.” The Anti-Defamation League quickly sent Gaetz a letter asking him to repudiate Johnson’s views.

On top of the invitation, Gaetz made an appearance on the conspiracist radio program *InfoWars*, which has claimed that the Sandy Hook massacre

was faked, that the Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando was a set-up to advance a gun-control agenda, that 9/11 was an inside job, and that juice boxes make kids gay. Gaetz countered criticism of his InfoWars appearance by going on MSNBC and then bragging to his Twitter followers that he seeks out all types of audiences.

Asked about the State of the Union invitation, Gaetz says he thinks Johnson is more of a “provoker” than anything else, though he says that if he had known about the Reddit post, it would have “certainly impacted” his decision to offer the ticket. As to his decision to go on InfoWars, Gaetz tells me he does not think the show’s host, Alex Jones, is credible, but—ever the lawyer—defends his decision to sit down with the infamous purveyor of fake news. Millions of people get their news from InfoWars, Gaetz argues, and he thought it would be a mistake to pass up an opportunity to reach that audience.

What audience was he able to reach at InfoWars that he couldn’t reach at Fox News?

“I don’t know,” Gaetz says. “I’m not a media demographics guy.”

Gaetz’s first brush with the alt-right came last summer, when he made headlines after one of his legislative staffers used material from a fanatical pro-Trump Reddit forum known for its conspiracy theories and anti-Semitism as the basis for an amendment Gaetz sponsored calling for a special counsel to be appointed to investigate Hillary Clinton’s use of a private email server. At the time, Gaetz defended the staffer, saying he was simply doing comprehensive research and gathering citizen input.

In our interview, Gaetz notes that he does not have a Reddit account and has never visited the site. And asked whether he identifies with the alt-right, he says he doesn’t even know what the alt-right is. “I’m a libertarian-leaning Republican,” Gaetz says. “That’s my ideology.”

During his six years in the Florida statehouse, Gaetz advocated for gun rights, medical marijuana, and animal welfare causes. He brought those

priorities with him when he came to Congress—along with a quixotic streak. The first bill he introduced took up just one line: “The Environmental Protection Agency shall terminate on December 31, 2018.”

The self-described “Freedom Caucus sympathizer” is remarkably candid, often cutting straight to the point when answering questions. Everything he says, no matter how farfetched, comes with a brash confidence.

“What you see is what you get with Matt for as long as I remember, and I think voters here in the Panhandle love it,” says Rebekah Bydlak, who was one of Gaetz’s Republican primary opponents in 2016.

Gaetz’s sister, Erin, agrees. She said that the popularity of her brother’s

decisions can be easily gauged by “the Publix poll.” Publix is a Florida-based grocery chain with locations across the southeast. “People tell you exactly what they think of you in the dairy aisle,” Erin says. And by that metric, she estimates voters firmly support her brother’s focus on the Russia probe and the Nunes memo.

When he comes up for reelection this year, Gaetz will face two of the primary opponents he defeated in 2016. But Gaetz isn’t worried about the controversies. The voters who sent him to Washington watch a lot of cable news, and they’re loyal to Trump.

“President Trump is a very different kind of Republican,” Gaetz tells me. And that’s precisely what Gaetz is aiming to be. ♦

## The Democrats’ Fake Mustache

Manufacturing a dream candidate to take down Paul Ryan. BY CHRISTIAN SCHNEIDER

*Milwaukee*  
“Western societies have long acknowledged that facial hair is evidently a sort of performance,” wrote historian of masculinity Christopher Oldstone-Moore in the *Journal of Social History* in 2011. “It has been recognized as a choice, a display, and even a mask intended either to disguise flaws or assert a character type.”

Enter hirsute Randy Bryce, Democratic candidate for Wisconsin’s 1st Congressional District and notable cookie duster enthusiast. Bryce, who has dubbed himself “Iron Stache,” has gained national attention in his quest to knock off Republican House speaker Paul Ryan. By emphasizing his robust lip sweater, Bryce has tried to

imbue his image with all of the positive connotations mustaches confer—that he’s an authentic, working-class champion of the little guy.

Bryce, a 53-year-old former union ironworker and Army veteran, is trying to parlay this blue-collar aesthetic into electoral success—and given the titan he’s trying to unseat, his efforts are getting plenty of attention. Writer Anthony Breznican tweeted that Bryce was “genetically engineered from Bruce Springsteen songs.” The wry American Mustache Institute nominated him for their 2017-18 Robert Goulet award for “Mustached American of the Year.”

But it was a heartstring-plucking YouTube video Bryce released last June that began his rapid rise to national prominence and saw him featured in the pages of virtually every prominent left-wing publication in America. In

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fact, Bryce's rise was too sudden—soon after his announcement, the vaunted Iron Stache appeared on CNN and looked lost in the bright lights. The media rookie stammered his way into endorsing a \$32 trillion tax increase to pay for single-payer health care as incredulous hosts John Berman and Poppy Harlow tried to lead him to a cogent answer; clearly, he had less than an iron-clad grip on his talking points.

Nevertheless, Bryce began to gain attention from the Hollywood set desperate to reestablish contact with America's working-class voters. *Sex and the City* star Cynthia Nixon showed up at a Bryce fundraiser held at a Manhattan cocktail bar. Whoopi Goldberg name-checked him on *The View*. Cringe-inducing interviews with comedians Samantha Bee and Sarah Silverman soon followed.

(Sample Silverman question: "You're a dad, a union leader, you're Polish and you're Mexican and your sister's a teacher and your dad's a cop, you're a cancer survivor and you're adopted and you're a veteran—how do we get more good people like you to run?" Frost-Nixon it was not.)

Yet it has been Bryce's relationship with one of America's most prominent public inebriates, comedian Chelsea Handler, that has brought him the most attention. Handler jumped on the Iron Stache bandwagon and last September posted a group photo of herself and actresses Aisha Tyler and Mary McCormack posing with Bryce, each woman sporting a fake mustache. Since then, Handler has tweeted in support of Bryce to her nearly nine million followers dozens of times; on his website, Bryce ran a contest offering entrants the chance to get a beer with Handler and Iron Stache.

On January 31, Handler was scheduled to attend a \$25-per-head public fundraiser for Bryce at a music theater in liberal Madison, well outside the district for which he is running. But after Handler posted a profane tweet attacking Sen. Lindsey Graham's sexuality, the event was quietly canceled

and converted to a \$500-per-person event at the private home of a Madison-area tech executive.

What Bryce has not yet grasped is that his big-money Hollywood friends are using him far more than he's using them. His savvy working-man image has allowed coastal elites to take a guy who has lost three local elections—one of them a Democratic primary—and use him to burnish their own blue-collar-friendly credentials. He is simply a walk-on performer in their community theater production of *Democracy, the Musical*. (Prior to her adoption of Iron



Randy Bryce visiting Washington, D.C., January 29

Stache, Handler's most notable cause was posting topless pictures of herself on Instagram to push the "#FreeTheNipple" movement.)

Bryce is nationally known because of who he's running against, and celebrities want everyone to know they're taking an active role in #Resisting Paul Ryan. Much like the white supremacist Paul Nehlen, who parlayed his quixotic GOP primary challenges to Ryan into national notoriety, Bryce is earning fame more as a tribute to his opponent's political prowess than to his own.

In fact, it's not even certain Ryan is running again, having yet to commit to being a candidate in 2018. Recent reports that the speaker was thinking about quitting prompted Bryce to issue a series of groan-inducing tweets suggesting that the power of his mustache

was the impetus for Ryan's indecision.

What no collection of comedians and starlets can paper over is the fact that Bryce is, at best, a third-tier candidate in a district Ryan has never won by less than double-digits. It's not even clear he will make it out of the Democratic primary against high school English teacher Cathy Myers. His fame is simply the triumph of marketing over substance; the Democrats' mustache is made of astroturf.

After months of uniformly positive media following Bryce's announcement video, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* reporter Daniel Bice began looking into the candidate's personal finances. Bice found that in 2015, the state had placed a lien on Bryce's property for failing to pay child support for the 11-year-old son he featured prominently in his first video advertisement. Bryce didn't fully pay off the \$1,257 owed to his ex-wife until two months after he had declared his candidacy.

Weeks later, Bryce paid off another \$4,200 loan that had been delinquent for 15 years. In 2004, Bryce borrowed nearly \$1,800 from his then-girlfriend in order to buy a car. But he stiffed her, leading to a court judgment against him that he only recently paid back with interest.

Last weekend, Bryce's name popped up in a *New York Times* article listing notable people who, attempting to seem more popular than they are, had purchased Twitter followers from a shady online vendor. Bryce's spokesperson conceded that before he became a candidate, he had paid "about \$10-20" to buy "1,000 to 1,500" followers," as he was "trying out blogging at the time."

It was just another example of how the Randy Bryce mystique has been built on a foundation of mustache wax. Bryce frequently rips Ryan for being a tool of his "wealthy donors" but has himself raised nearly seven times as much money from New York and California as he has from Wisconsin; on the night of Donald Trump's first State of the Union address, Bryce even

paid \$1,500 to run a television advertisement in Seattle and San Francisco, far from the southern Wisconsin district where he's running. (Bryce has defended this course because "that's where a lot of money comes in from.")

In the months following Donald Trump's 2016 general election win, Democrats began plotting new strategies to win back voters in America's heartland who live check-to-check. Randy Bryce is the Frankenstein monster of those strategy meetings; if he appears to be straight out of central casting, it's because he is. Bryce

is simply an empty mustache cast in *Nancy Pelosi's Hardhat Revue*.

Give the Democrats credit—it is actually bold to hang a candidate's aura on his flavor saver, an adornment so out of favor politically that no major party presidential nominee has sported one since Thomas E. Dewey in 1948. But one must look no further than the president to recognize that these are unprecedented times, and the left clearly thinks they have manufactured the perfect Trump antidote.

Even if it's obvious Randy Bryce is just a disguise. ♦

never been content with the Constitution's studious avoidance of slavery or the great compromises engineered by Congress in 1820 and 1850. They had demanded censorship of the U.S. mail. They had demanded a free pass for slavery in the western territories, and when they could not extort it from Congress, they appealed to an utterly arbitrary ruling by the Supreme Court in the case of Dred Scott.

By the 1850s, they were demanding a national slave code, reopening of the African slave trade, and the annexation of Cuba as a new playground for slavery. The election of Lincoln was the signal that they could expect to gain nothing more by their demands, since Lincoln's whopping Electoral College majority had been won without a single electoral vote from the South. At that moment, slaveholders concluded that their game was over and announced that they were leaving.

But Lincoln found no secession clause in the Constitution: "I hold that in contemplation of universal law and of the Constitution the Union of these States is perpetual." To break up the Union and then insist that this was an expression of liberty was not liberty at all, but anarchy. And he knew what anarchy looked like, growing up in Kentucky and Indiana where (as he once remarked) he had seen "a good deal of the backside of this world." His earliest major political speeches denounced the "mobocratic spirit" as the great threat to a democratic order, and secession he regarded as merely another manifestation of mob rule.

Just as a mob responds with anarchy when the rule of law does not provide it with the results it demands, so a political mob—in this case, the secessionists—had responded with anarchy for, as Lincoln insisted, secession is "the essence of anarchy." It may feel like liberty, but it is only the liberty felt by the bungee-jumper who has failed to attach the bungee-cord to something stable.

But if society, by resorting to anarchy, poses one threat to the rule of law, there remains an equal threat in the temptation to turn loose the full power of the state in suppressing anarchy. The Constitution did not actually

# Statesmanship and Mr. Lincoln

An appreciation on the occasion of his birthday.

BY ALLEN C. GUELZO

Statesmanship, like its popular cousin *leadership*, is an elusive quality to identify, if only because it varies from the context of one political order to another. In monarchies and dictatorships, the lines of a society are drawn horizontally, with classes of elites, the military, and bureaucrats pressing down on civil society, which is itself structured horizontally by economic class. Statesmanship in that world is measured by how effectively it promotes authority, display, honor, and submission.

But in the republic created by the American Founders, the lines are drawn vertically, with the enjoyment of liberty and self-direction awarded on the one side to society and the administration of the state arrayed on the other, and with a middle band between the two created by

law. The rule of law is what prevents an overmighty or impatient state from oppressing a free society and prevents society from overwhelming the state by debasing liberty into anarchy.

Keeping the rule of law unimpaired is the great achievement of democratic statesmanship. But it is rarely simple, and crises like war abound with temptations for both the state and the society to wave it aside. We do, however, have one particularly monumental example of democratic statesmanship, and in the face of the cruelest challenge ever offered to the life of the American republic, and that example is Abraham Lincoln.

The secession of the slave states that formed the Southern Confederacy in 1861 was advertised by its promoters as a peaceful and liberty-loving solution to a crisis they believed was caused by the state—in this case, the election of an avowed anti-slavery president, Abraham Lincoln, in 1860. This was a ruse. In truth, slaveholders had been agitating against the rule of law on slavery for decades. They had

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provide much in the way of specifics about how to deal with anarchy, and Lincoln was compelled to improvise rationales for suspending the writ of habeas corpus, the purging of government employees through the use of loyalty oaths, the creation of military commissions to conduct trials, the confiscation of property, and even the emancipation of slaves.

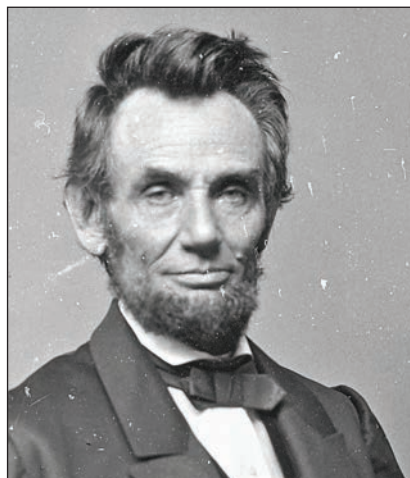
The results were not pretty. He ordered the expulsion of former Ohio congressman Clement L. Vallandigham to the Confederacy after Vallandigham's sensational arrest and imprisonment for an anti-conscription speech in May 1863. He also ordered the shutdown of two New York City newspapers, the *New York World* and the *New York Journal of Commerce*, on May 18, 1864, and imprisonment of the papers' "editors, proprietors, and publishers" for having published what turned out to be a bogus presidential proclamation of "an immediate and peremptory draft" call.

These actions form the marrow of Lincoln-hatred, then and now. But what Lincoln's despisers do not reckon with is how little these actions followed any sort of consistent strategy for overthrowing the rule of law—and frequently had no direction from Lincoln at all. Marcus "Brick" Pomeroy of the *La Crosse Democrat* abused Lincoln with frightful energy all through the war, culminating in his wish that if Lincoln should be reelected in 1864, "we trust some bold hand will pierce his heart with dagger point for the public good"—yet Pomeroy was never arrested. When Vallandigham slipped back into the North in 1864, Lincoln dismissed any further action against him unless there was "palpable injury or imminent danger to the military proceeding from him."

What is surprising in the case of Lincoln's wartime presidency is how few such dents were made in the rule of law, especially compared to what he might otherwise have done. Between 13,500 and 14,400 civilian arrests were made under the Lincoln administration—which in a Northern population of 22 million did not exactly represent a Night of the Long Knives; of

these, 866 can be considered "political" arrests, and the largest share (a bit more than 40 percent) occurred in the border states, which were riven by guerrilla warfare. Another 20 percent or so appear to have been smugglers and blockade-runners who were being detained as witnesses for hearings in prize courts.

But the most remarkable homage Lincoln paid to the rule of law lies in one action which never seemed to have been seriously considered—cancellation of the national elections in



Lincoln in 1864

1864. In the middle of a civil war—an emergency so great that the instability threatened by a change in government was as serious a threat as military invasion—nothing might have seemed more forgivable than the postponement of elections. But Lincoln was entirely opposed to the idea. "We can not have free government without elections," Lincoln said to a crowd of well-wishers after surviving the hazard of reelection in 1864, "and if the rebellion could force us to forgo, or postpone a national election it might fairly claim to have already conquered and ruined us."

Curiously, the Lincoln-haters pay little attention to the far vaster disregard the Confederates had for property, due process, and civil liberty. Conceived in anarchy and indifferent to the proposition that all men are created equal, the Confederacy confiscated property with much more zeal than the Lincoln administration, including Jefferson's Monticello

(which had been bought by a Northern investor before the war), while Union confiscation of property under the two Confiscation Acts of 1861 and 1862 took place on a large scale only in Louisiana, and even then involved only 24 properties.

In the Confederacy, political dissent was met with roundups and firing squads. Travel within the Confederacy was regulated by internal passports; Arkansas was converted into a martial-law dictatorship; Virginia attempted to impose prohibition; the Alien Enemies Act of 1861 mandated the arrest of *any* Northerners within the Confederacy, and a follow-up proclamation ordered their expulsion within 40 days. Anarchy has its charms, but the charms are temporary, and as Lincoln predicted, the yearning for a return to order would eventually induce the anarchists to embrace despotism, if only out of desperation.

Lincoln has sometimes been compared to Otto von Bismarck as a ruthless manufacturer of the modern state. This comparison would probably have surprised both Bismarck and Lincoln, since Lincoln was neither an aristocrat nor a soldier. It would also have surprised William H. Smith, who met Lincoln first as a cub reporter for the *Indianapolis Atlas* and who went on to become a major business figure in that city. "I first saw Mr. Lincoln in August or September of 1859," Smith wrote in 1932.

During some previous campaigns, Mr. Lincoln had spoken in some of the western counties of Indiana, but this was his first appearance as a speaker in Indianapolis. . . . I noticed that he never used the term obedience to the law, but always reverence, seeming to regard that term higher and more comprehensive than the other. . . . I remember very distinctly that he spoke of this reverence for the law as the "palladium of our liberties, our shield, buckler and high tower."

For all that we today laud Abraham Lincoln for his wisdom, humility, and prudence, it is this fundamental reverence for the rule of law that is the shining mark of his statesmanship and the statesmanship of any republic. ♦

# The Cheerleader

*Betsy DeVos is making her mark as education secretary—  
but not in the manner her opponents feared or her allies hoped*

BY PETER J. BOYER

One year and a day after Betsy DeVos was confirmed as secretary of education, she sat in her seventh-floor office, a vast and soulless space in one of the unloveliest buildings in Washington, and reflected upon the process that brought her there.

Her confirmation hearing had amounted to a verbal mugging. She was mocked as a clueless amateur and portrayed as an enemy of public education. And that was just the critique from Democratic senators. Their outside allies were less constrained. *Vanity Fair's* Richard Lawson worried that confirming DeVos would lead to gay kids being herded into religious schools, where they'd be driven to suicide. "Betsy DeVos's policies will kill children," he tweeted. "That is not an exaggeration in any sense." Bill Maher joked that DeVos "is the worst person to be around schoolbooks since Lee Harvey Oswald." Teachers' unions warned that DeVos was "an actual danger to students" and "the most anti-public-school nominee in the history of the department."

DeVos's confirmation required a vice-presidential tie-breaking vote, a first for a cabinet appointee, and the vilification followed her into office. On her first visit to a public school, protesters physically blocked her from entering, with one activist drawing near her and repeatedly screaming, "Shame!" Protest became the norm at her public appearances; when a U.S. marshal's detail was assigned to protect her, critics complained of the cost. "Everyone," the *Huffington Post* flatly declared last fall, "hates the education secretary."

"It's hard," DeVos says. "It has been hurtful in a lot of ways, because I've been misunderstood, and I think it's hurtful to be misunderstood."

But DeVos's opponents understood exactly who she

was. For 30 years, she's been a determined and effective advocate of school choice: a target of the organized left long before Donald Trump ever ran for president. She is a school-choice fundamentalist who believes that taxpayer money should follow students to whatever schools families deem best—including private ones. That is what makes her anathema. Being a billionaire and an evangelical Christian only makes her an easier target.

The opposition to DeVos's nomination became a political campaign. Activist groups on the left teamed with teachers' unions, flooding the Capitol switchboard and filling senators' inboxes with instant outrage. DeVos was so thoroughly demonized that Democratic politicians around the country use her name as fundraising bait. Lisa Murkowski, one of two Republican senators who voted against DeVos's confirmation, says she was persuaded by the outpouring of calls and emails from everyday Alaskans. That outpouring was owing largely to a mobilization effort organized by an activist named Alyse Galvin, who has parlayed her anti-DeVos campaign into a run for Alaska's only

House seat, held for 45 years by Republican Don Young.

Some of the animus toward DeVos reflects the view among professional educators that she is a meddlesome dilettante, a wealthy amateur who involves herself in education in order to have something to do. This caricature, though unkind, reflects DeVos's biography, as well as the story she often tells about what drew her to the school-choice crusade.

Her father, Edgar Prince, was a clever engineer from Holland, Michigan, who (family lore holds) helped to develop the lighted sun visor that became standard equipment on the world's automobiles and who built a manufacturing firm that eventually sold for more than \$1 billion. Her brother, Erik Prince, is a former Navy SEAL and the founder of the security firm Blackwater. Her husband, Dick DeVos, is scion of the family that built Amway.



*DeVos in Washington, January 18*

*Peter J. Boyer is a national correspondent at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.*

DeVos attended private schools in Michigan, as did her own four children. One day, she and her husband visited a private Christian school in Grand Rapids called the Potter's House, which focused on serving underprivileged children. When she heard stories about how the parents of the children she met there struggled to pay tuition, she was struck by a sense of injustice and determined to use her wealth in the cause of giving other such parents the opportunity that she'd taken for granted. To DeVos, her work for school choice is, literally, an act of Christian charity.

Trump's election seemed like a golden opportunity for the school-choice movement. The president himself has no record on the issue, but Mike Pence is a true believer, and Trump promised during his campaign to spend \$20 billion in block grants to promote school choice, including private-school options for disadvantaged children. The DeVos appointment was a characteristic Trumpian grace note, like naming Scott Pruitt, *bête noire* of environmental activists, to head the EPA.

The choice movement had further reason for optimism when Trump's first education budget was released last spring. It cut \$9 billion from various programs, but added \$1.4 billion for programs advancing school choice—including money for private-school vouchers.

Democrats were predictably opposed to the budget, most sounding like a version of former Obama education secretary John King, who called the Trump plan a "scheme to divert resources from our highest need schools." But congressional Republicans weren't much more enthused about the proposal, mostly because they didn't like such deep cuts or the diversion of money to voucher programs. Some conservatives warned that sending federal money to private schools could have unintended consequences, on matters both mundane and profound. Most parents now sending their kids to private schools arrange for transportation themselves. But under some future, more activist administration, conservatives warned, a bureaucrat could condition voucher eligibility on whether a school provides transportation. "If a federal bureaucrat decided what private schools needed to do, in terms of curriculum or anything else, suddenly you've created this morass," says Frederick Hess, the director of education policy at the American Enterprise Institute. The Trump-DeVos budget was shut down.

DeVos herself seems conflicted by the implications of any expansion of the federal role in K-12 education, even for so cherished a cause as school choice. She came to the job deeply suspicious of bureaucratic overreach, and her short time at the agency has confirmed her view. At a speech last May to the American Federation for Children, a school-choice group she'd cofounded and chaired, she tried to temper expectations of an activist tenure from her. "We should have zero interest in substituting the current

big government approach for our own big-government approach," she told the group. "When it comes to education, no solution, not even ones we like, should be dictated or run from Washington, D.C."

When we meet in her office in mid-January, DeVos repeats a point she makes often—that the federal government wields outsized influence on states and local school districts because of the regulatory power attached to federal dollars. "Federal funding for education has accounted for less than 10 percent of the total spent, yet the footprint from a regulation perspective has been much, much bigger," she says. "Our goal is to continue to roll out of that, to the extent that we can do that within the department."

DeVos's aim is a pleasant rarity in Washington. She wants to meaningfully reduce the size and the reach of the agency she runs, diminishing her own power in the process. It happens that our meeting takes place on the eve of a government shutdown, and her team has put in place a plan to furlough about 90 percent of the department's 4,000 employees. I ask what will happen if the shutdown lasted into the school week.

"School should go on," she says.

Why not just make the furlough permanent?

She laughs, then says, "We're continuing to look at the whole of the footprint of this department to ensure that we are returning and moving power to the states in every way possible."

As it happens, conditions are quite propitious for DeVos's devolutionary mission, owing to—of all things—a late Obama-era law designed to rein in the federal government's influence over America's schools.

The Department of Education didn't exist until 1979, when Jimmy Carter, making good on a promise to the National Education Association, created a new cabinet-level agency. Ronald Reagan, who saw the agency as an intrusion on local affairs, tried to eliminate it, to no avail. (A 1982 *New York Times* article on the effort was subtitled "The Department That Would Not Die.") The department, and its influence over American schooling, steadily grew through the decades, with no correlative improvement in student outcomes.

Still, as the learning gap between disadvantaged students and their peers widened, both Republicans and Democrats worried. In 2001, George W. Bush and Massachusetts senator Ted Kennedy decided that the fix was a massive expansion of federal involvement and together produced the education overhaul called No Child Left Behind. The law set national achievement goals and prescribed standardized tests to determine whether schools were meeting the targets. Those that did not meet the proficiency goals were subject to an escalating scale of punishments imposed

by the feds. If a school failed to meet standards two years in a row, it was labeled a School in Need of Improvement and required to develop plans for addressing its failure. Repeated failure could result in all or part of the school's staff being fired and a state takeover.

No Child Left Behind was hugely expensive, highly intrusive, and a massive failure. The standardized exams, which inevitably led to "teaching to the test," were unpopular with parents and students. Teachers considered the punitive elements ineffective and unfair. By 2011, the Education Department reported that 37 percent of the nation's schools were failing to meet the annual goals, and Education Secretary Arne Duncan predicted that number would rise to 82 percent by 2014.

The Obama administration should have scrapped No Child Left Behind, but decided instead to tinker—and, of course, to spend more money. The feds offered states waivers from the onerous law, along with Race to the Top grants (using money provided by the stimulus program), while awarding them points for adopting the Common Core curriculum—a set of standards for the math and English students ought to be learning. Unsurprisingly, most states took the dough and adopted Common Core. Test scores did not improve—they actually dropped in math.

"We saw two presidents from different political parties and philosophies take two different approaches," DeVos said in a recent speech at the American Enterprise Institute assessing the reform efforts of the last two administrations. "Federally mandated assessments. Federal money. Federal standards. All originated in Washington, and none solved the problem. Too many of America's students are still unprepared. Perhaps the lesson lies not in what made the approaches different, but in what made them the same: the federal government. Both approaches had the same Washington 'experts' telling educators how to behave. The lesson is in the false premise—that Washington knows what's best for educators, parents, and students."

The long, failed experiment of the Department of Education acting as a national school board ended in 2015, when Congress passed, and President Obama signed, the Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA. The guiding force behind the legislation was Tennessee Republican Lamar Alexander, who as chairman of the Senate's primary education committee and a former secretary of education himself is Washington's most influential voice on education policy. Alexander wanted the government's role in schooling dramatically cut back, to something like its modest beginnings, and he managed to shape legislation that would

please conservatives while leveraging teachers' opposition to the Bush-Obama programs to help win over Democrats.

The law perfectly anticipated the deregulatory impulses of the Trump-DeVos era. It didn't eliminate testing, but the standards and the matter of holding to account those schools that failed to achieve them would be left up to the states. And in measuring results, states could employ factors other than test scores. The federal government would not coax them toward a favored reform path, as Obama had done with Common Core (and as some conservatives want DeVos to do with school choice).

Looking back, DeVos wonders how ESSA ever happened. She suspects that liberals must have counted on an activist Education Department to interpret the law. "I think, frankly, that the left figured that they could regulate a lot more beyond what was passed legislatively," she says. Indeed,

toward the end of the Obama administration, the department created rules that ran counter to the spirit of ESSA—one tying teacher-training money to student performance and another giving the feds a say in deciding which schools were failing and how to improve them. Alexander led an effort to overturn the two rules, employing a rarely used check on midnight regulating called the Congressional Review Act.

In January 2017, as the new administration was transitioning into power, Alexander met with a group of 700 state school administrators and school board members, assuring them a new day had come. They

should assume the new Department of Education would "say yes" to whatever plans they devised to improve their schools. "You will have a president and an education secretary who do not believe in a national school board," he said. "They believe in you. They want you to make those decisions."

But bureaucracy, as DeVos and Alexander would soon learn, does not turn nimbly.

One day last June, Delaware's secretary of education, Susan Bunting, received a letter from DeVos's agency containing some dismaying news. The state's ESSA plan was being rejected.

"Because the proposed long-term goals for academic achievement are not ambitious," the letter instructed, the Delaware department of education "must revise its plan to identify and describe long-term goals that are ambitious for all students and for each subgroup of students." The letter went on at length, listing the many ways that Delaware's school plans lacked ambition and required more rigor.

Similar letters were received by Bunting's counterparts in New Mexico and Nevada. Soon, the phones were ringing



*DeVos welcomed at Harvard, September 28, 2017*

in Alexander's office, and angry state officials were sharing their frustrations. The senator talked to the Education Department staffer who'd sent the letters and explained that the point of the law was that states, not the federal government, would decide what was "ambitious" and "rigorous."

The department staffer, acting assistant secretary of education Jason Botel, didn't seem to take Alexander's point. Botel, a school-reform activist from Baltimore, had come to the department on the recommendation of Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner, who were friends and business associates of Botel's patrons, property developer Reed Cordish and his wife Maggie Katz. But Botel is a particular sort of reformer, a social-justice advocate who sees school choice as a way, he once wrote, to "dismantle the white supremacist system that exists." When Botel arrived at the thinly staffed Education Department and was told by career staffers that their job was to instruct states on how to reform, he was not inclined to disagree.

Alexander called DeVos, who seemed unaware of the situation, according to several people familiar with the incident. "She was appalled," one of them recalls.

After a talking-to from the seventh floor, Botel got with the program ("he evolved," as one co-worker put it) and is now considered a valuable member of DeVos's team. But the episode was a lesson in bureaucratic dynamics for DeVos, a wealthy outsider from the private sector who is still adjusting to the rhythms and pace of a federal agency. Before coming to Washington, DeVos was accustomed to working on an iPad with a keyboard attachment. When she arrived at her new job, she planned to continue doing so but was told that she'd have to order a government-issued device. She made the order soon after she was sworn in, in February. The government iPad was delivered to her in July.

More frustrating has been the task of winning over the department to an entirely new vision of its purpose. "That is a challenge," DeVos says. "I think there was a lot of skepticism when I first came in, particularly given the whole confirmation process and how intense it was." Alexander and other allies on the Hill have provided helpful counsel, and DeVos has beefed up the team around her. Among her top aides is Peter Oppenheim, a former staffer for Alexander who helped write ESSA.

DeVos says that she sees signs that the bureaucracy is beginning to respond. "I mean, there are people here who want to do what's right for students," she says. "And I think they are, more and more, being won over in that regard. . . . I've had all-staff engagements regularly. And we've tried to find leadership, and develop leadership, within the staff, too, that is aligned and will help to bring their cohort around. And we're finding some, yes." She begins her second year wiser in the ways of Washington and with a new understanding of her own role.

In 1987, William Bennett, Reagan's third secretary of education, attended an education forum in Chicago, where he remarked that Chicago's schools were the worst in the nation. His comment was roundly criticized by local leaders, especially Chicago's Democratic mayor, Harold Washington, who noted that Bennett worked for Ronald Reagan, "who has literally dismantled public education in this country."

But the next day, Washington convened a civic group to begin considering school reform.

That story was recently recounted by a DeVos ally, by way of illustrating that a secretary of education can have impact without exercising much actual power. In the era of ESSA, DeVos can't mandate her favorite school reforms, and her department can't tilt the scales toward choice. That leaves her with the bully pulpit, which DeVos says she'll use to persuade states to shake free of what Bennett once termed "compliance mode."

"I'm pretty intent on having an opportunity to further encourage states to do things to embrace the flexibility that they have, and to encourage creativity, and to, frankly, push that flexibility down to the local level," she says. "And not do what the federal government has done for the past couple of decades, which is consolidate control."

She does have some meaningful administrative power, which she has used, for instance, in rescinding the Obama administration's 2011 "Dear Colleague" letter on sexual harassment, which led college campuses around the country to erect a regime of adjudication that many believe denies the accused due process. DeVos will replace the Obama policy, but only after going through the formal regulatory process of proposing a rule, followed by a period of public comment from all sides.

She has instructed her staff, per a presidential order issued last year, to examine the vast store of her department's existing regulations and to cull the deadwood.

"Probably an equally important thing is what we are not doing," she says. "We are not adding new regulation and new burdens to states, school districts, communities, parents, and teachers."

Betsy DeVos still means to make her mark as education secretary—but it won't be in the manner that her opponents feared or that her allies in the choice movement wished for.

As it happened, the day I went to interview her was the start of National School Choice Week, and she later attended a rally on Capitol Hill of choicers and kids from six D.C. charter schools. "We need to collectively rethink how we do education here in this country," she told them. "We need to give parents empowerment and choices to choose the right school, the right education, for all of their children."

And then she led them in a cheer: "When parents have a choice, kids have a chance!" ♦

# Whirlpool Goes to Washington

*Or why you are going to pay more for your next washer*

BY TONY MECIA

**Y**ou are going to pay more for your next washing machine. To understand why, let's look at what happened at Whirlpool's headquarters in Benton Harbor, Mich., in 2011. The company was feeling pressure from foreign competition. Its stock price had fallen by half. It had announced plans to slash 5,000 jobs, or 10 percent of its workforce.

Whirlpool had bid to make Kenmore front-load washing machines for Sears, a longtime client headquartered just a couple hours away outside Chicago, across Lake Michigan. But Sears awarded the work to LG, the South Korean electronics conglomerate. Sears told Whirlpool its bid was 9 percent too high. Losing that bid, Whirlpool executives later said, cost their company \$260 million in expected revenue.

Faced with robust, lower-cost overseas competition from LG and from Samsung, another Korean electronics conglomerate, Whirlpool in December 2011 turned to Washington for help. Executives said LG and Samsung were unfairly pricing their washing machines too low and sought a tariff on competitors' products. That process culminated this January, when the Trump administration sided with Whirlpool and approved new tariffs on foreign-made washing machines.

Trump's decision has been widely depicted as a protectionist president siding with an American manufacturer over consumers. That's true—President Trump makes no secret of his affinity for products made in America, and Whirlpool's competitors quickly announced the new tariffs would cause them to hike prices of washing machines by up to \$100 apiece.

But a review of hundreds of pages of testimony and exhibits before the United States International Trade Commission (ITC) shows that the story of competition in washing machines is more complex than a patriotic

company suffering at the hands of unscrupulous foreign competitors. While Whirlpool positioned itself as a proud supporter of U.S. workers this time, at other times it had no scruples about building appliances for the U.S. market abroad when it suited its interests. The case shows how U.S. companies use international trade law as a competitive weapon against rivals with the blessing of politicians from both parties.

All of the companies that make and sell washing machines are big multinational firms with factories around the globe. One of the many ironies of this trade case is that in the name of advancing U.S. interests, the government is punishing LG and Samsung—which employ thousands of U.S. workers—while also helping GE Appliances, which makes washing machines in Kentucky but is owned by a Chinese company.

“In a world of international corporations with global supply chains, trying to protect a purely domestic industry against purely foreign competition is almost a fool's errand,” says Raj Bhala, a professor of international trade law at the University of Kansas. “Those industries are less and less on one side of the border or another.”

There could be more trade cases on the way, too. A *Washington Post* analysis in 2017 found that the number of U.S. producers filing trade complaints was at a 16-year high. Pending cases include rubber bands from China, Thailand, and Sri Lanka; olives from Spain; and citric acid from Belgium.

**T**he story of the washing machine tariffs starts back in the early 2000s. Whirlpool and Maytag were then the major players. They made big, boxy white washing machines, and they shrugged off any suggestion that foreign competitors could become serious rivals. Their strength was dependability. The Maytag repairman, who appeared in TV commercials over several decades, famously had nothing to do.

Yet foreign competitors, led by LG and Samsung, had begun selling washing machines in the United States with features that were popular with consumers. These new

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machines came in different colors, were energy efficient, and loaded laundry in the front instead of on the top.

Domestic manufacturers had their varieties, too. Whirlpool, for instance, made front-load washing machines in Germany, while keeping production of its traditional top-load machines in Clyde, Ohio, outside Toledo. Whirlpool's CEO, Jeff Fettig, told the *New York Times* that cranking out new-style washing machines in Germany "was the fastest way to the American market" because the company already made them there for Europe. If he had to build a plant from scratch, he told the *Times* back then, he'd probably put it not in Ohio, but in Mexico. In 2004, the company announced a \$320 million expansion of a plant in Mexico, which would make washing machines for the U.S. market.

Whirlpool made other competitive moves, too. It bought ailing Maytag in 2006, closed three U.S. plants, and slashed 4,500 jobs. The Bush Justice Department approved the purchase, despite antitrust concerns. The new company would make more than 70 percent of the washers and dryers sold in the U.S. market, but regulators predicted the combined company would be unable to raise prices because of the growing competition from Asian manufacturers.

But the market was changing. Consumers were increasingly drawn to stylish and energy-efficient front-loading washing machines made abroad, even though they cost more than the traditional boxy white ones that loaded from the top. People who had worked their entire careers in appliances were shocked.

In testimony before the ITC, a Home Depot executive said the switch in consumer preferences in the mid-2000s caught his company by surprise. "[On] Labor Day 2006, we introduced the LG red washer back then, and quite frankly, I didn't think anybody would buy it," said Bob Baird, Home Depot's vice president of appliances and kitchens. "The fact is, people wanted to buy that, and they paid \$1,400 apiece, and we were oversold for six months. So fashion is a part of it."

LG and Samsung were making inroads in the U.S. market. Between 2008 and 2010, the market share of U.S. washing machine producers fell from 72 percent to

60 percent, according to Whirlpool. At the same time, market share of the Korean companies here rose from 20 percent to 36 percent.

The Korean brands were a hit with consumers for reasons beyond price. *Consumer Reports* in 2012 wrote: "Unfortunately, buying mostly American doesn't guarantee top performance or reliability. Models from LG (including the LG-made Kenmore models) and Samsung, both South Korean brands, dominate our recommendations for both front- and top-load washers." LG and Samsung "are the most reliable brands for front-loaders," the magazine said, citing reader surveys.

Faced with a surge of imports, U.S. manufacturers of consumer goods have few good options. Competing on price is almost impossible because of lower foreign labor costs. They can move production abroad. They can seek to differentiate their products to show consumers that U.S.-made products justify a higher price. Or they can get out of the business entirely—as GE did when it sold its appliance unit to the Chinese in 2016.

Whirlpool took a different path. It shut down production lines in Germany and Mexico and consolidated its washing-machine manufacturing in Clyde. It began pressing its case against competitors in Washington.

In 2011, after losing the Sears bid, Whirlpool filed a petition with the ITC, claiming that LG and Samsung were illegally flooding the U.S. market with low-priced washing machines. The imports, Whirlpool complained, "compromised the economics of Whirlpool's U.S. production of subject washers to the point where Whirlpool's ability to maintain its commitment to expanded U.S. production is very much at risk."

In testimony, Whirlpool's vice president for U.S. sales, Sam Abdelnour, said: "I am fighting every day to sustain the washer business against this extraordinary discounting from LG and Samsung. I get constant pressure from the retailers to meet competition from LG and Samsung. We're between a rock and a hard place. If we do, our best products become unprofitable. If we don't, we're off the floor and our volume suffers greatly. Either way, we lose and, as you can see, we lose big."



*Actress Jennifer Veal attends the 2012 debut of LG Electronics's Mega-Capacity TurboWash Washer in Beverly Hills, Calif.*

Under international law, countries can impose duties to combat “dumping” if domestic industries are harmed by foreign-made products that are being sold for less than they are in their home market (in this case, South Korea). There’s no requirement to show that the goods for sale were sold below production cost or subsidized by a foreign government.

**I**n the United States, the power to remedy dumping is shared by the Commerce Department and the ITC, a quasi-judicial agency whose commissioners come from both parties (appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate). The theory behind imposing antidumping remedies is that by selling goods abroad at an unfairly low price, foreign companies could destroy domestic industries, take over an entire market, then use their newfound monopoly power to raise prices. Many economists and business professors, though, doubt that the market actually works that way.

“It’s a charming idea, that if I’m a big company, I’m going to drive you out of business by temporarily taking losses until you go bankrupt, and then I’ll jack my prices up again,” says Ram Mudambi, who teaches international business strategy at Temple University’s Fox School of Business. “They’ve been trying to find evidence of that happening for 60 or 70 years and have been able to find squat.”

Yet, after the Whirlpool complaint, the Commerce Department concluded that Korean washing machines were being sold at unfairly low prices, and the ITC approved antidumping measures against Korean-made washing machines in 2012. LG and Samsung quickly moved production to China. Whirlpool in 2015 filed an antidumping case against Chinese-made washing machines, which it won. LG and Samsung moved production to Thailand and Vietnam. Exasperated, in 2017, Whirlpool filed what’s called a “safeguard” petition, which allows the president to impose tariffs or quotas if the ITC finds imports are the “substantial cause” of “serious” injury to a domestic manufacturer, regardless of the product’s country of origin.

In the main hearing room at the ITC in early September, executives from the competing washing machine makers faced off. They were joined by Ohio’s two senators, hordes of lawyers, diplomats from South Korea and Indonesia, and more than 50 Whirlpool workers bused in from Clyde. A row of washing machines lined the back wall.

The two sides told starkly different stories. Fettig, the Whirlpool CEO, described the company’s factory in Ohio, where more than 3,000 employees of an iconic U.S. brand labored to make the best washing machines in the world but were stymied by devious foreign competitors. In just a few short years, he said, the washing machine division went from profitable to steep operating losses and had to curtail new investment and hiring.

“At Whirlpool,” Fettig said, “the washer business has been the company’s lifeblood for more than a century—at least it had been until recent years, when LG and Samsung destroyed the economics of the U.S. washer business through their flood of low-priced imports.”

Samsung executives, though, told a different story—one of savvy upstart competitors entering the U.S. market and winning customers through innovation and hard work, while Whirlpool stuck to its old ways.

“The market shifted to front-load washers. Whirlpool didn’t capitalize on this trend,” said John Herrington, senior vice president of home appliances for Samsung Electronics America. “Consumer preferences shifted to design and style. Whirlpool didn’t keep pace. How and where consumers shopped for appliances changed. Whirlpool didn’t adjust. We have not harmed Whirlpool. Rather, we recognized and anticipated the changing market and drove new trends. Consumers responded by embracing our brand.”

At times, the testimony got personal. A lawyer for LG pointed out that imports couldn’t be hurting Whirlpool too badly, since the company paid Fettig a total of \$75 million between 2012 and 2016. Whirlpool last year made \$350 million in profits on \$21 billion in sales—a lower profit margin than that of most companies its size. About half of Whirlpool’s sales come from overseas.

In October, the commissioners voted unanimously in favor of Whirlpool. They recommended tariffs of up to 50 percent. In January, Trump approved the ITC recommendations, along with ones on solar panels, saying, “My administration is committed to defending American companies, and they’re been very badly hurt from harmful import surges that threaten the livelihood of their workers.” They were the first safeguard cases approved by a president since 2002.

Whirlpool celebrated the decision and said it would add 200 jobs in Ohio. A spokesman told the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, “This case is all about fair competition among appliance companies and real benefits to consumers. Overseas competitors . . . didn’t have consumers’ best interest at heart.”

Within days, LG said it would raise prices. Goldman Sachs estimates the new tariffs will cause prices to rise between 8 percent and 20 percent. Higher prices could hit showrooms within months.

Mudambi, the Temple business professor, says the tariffs might help Whirlpool in the short run. But the future belongs to companies that innovate. “In the long run, [tariffs] are never a good idea,” he says. “It just makes them fat and inefficient. . . . It’s going to be a real uphill battle for them. It’s in the consumers’ mind now that the really fancy washing machines are Korean.” ♦



Today's scenic waterfront in Chattanooga—home to an annual music festival and the Tennessee Aquarium—arose from careful planning.

# When Localism Works

*Success stories for better cities and better lives.* BY GRACY OLMSTEAD

Many of America's cities are struggling. Once-strong communities have experienced post-industrial collapse, rampant unemployment, and brain drain. Crumbling infrastructure, the opioid crisis, and a host of lesser pathologies have contributed to instability and frustration among citizens and leaders.

In the face of these challenges, the available policy solutions often seem unsatisfactory. Some people say we need a new federal fix—a renovated set of Great Society programs, perhaps, or a trillion-dollar infrastructure plan. Others believe, as Kevin Williamson

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**The New Localism**  
*How Cities Can Thrive in the Age of Populism*  
 by Bruce Katz and Jeremy Nowak  
 Brookings, 290 pp., \$25.99

wrote in *National Review* in 2016, that “dysfunctional, downscale communities ... deserve to die.”

It may be that fresh answers can be found among the “localists”—intellectual and wonkish conservatives and liberals who have found, at least when it comes to problems, some common ground. Inspired by such writers as Wendell Berry, Jane Jacobs, and Wilhelm Röpke, localism generally asserts that federal oversight is usually too heavy-handed, uniform, and cronyist to

serve local communities well. Organizations like Smart Growth America, the Congress for the New Urbanism, and Strong Towns have advocated for a small-scale renewal of urban communities and the built environment. In books like *Why Place Matters*, on websites like *Front Porch Republic* and *CityLab*, and in magazines like *Yes!* and the *American Conservative*, journalists and academics have explored how localism can help solve social ills and empower citizens.

For some of these thinkers, localism is a decidedly libertarian idea: a means for individualism and innovation to flourish. For others, such as Berry, a novelist and farmer, the idea is more conservationist and traditional—localists ought to preserve and protect their communities from abuse, unbridled

DON BURKETT

change, and federal hubris. Still others suggest that localism is truly the new progressivism: They believe that real power and progress can only be achieved through autonomous localities, as local governments working in tandem with private philanthropists and powerful CEOs draw their communities into the increasingly globalized economy.

*The New Localism*, a new book by Bruce Katz and Jeremy Nowak, fits best in the last category: They present a variety of city-building strategies that emphasize the grassroots and small-scale, advancing broadly conservative principles of subsidiarity but giving them a progressive spin. Katz is a scholar at the Brookings Institution and a former co-director of its program on metropolitan policy; Nowak is a fellow at Drexel University's Lindy Institute for Urban Innovation and the creator of the Reinvestment Fund, one of the largest community investment institutions in the nation.

Katz and Nowak counter the top-down, federally run approach to governance we've become so accustomed to over the last half-century or more, suggesting that cities do not need the feds and Washington politicians to save them. With D.C.'s deadlock and hyperpartisanship come an opportunity: "The ability to get things done has shifted from command-and-control systems to the collective efforts of civil society, government, and private institutions."

The book covers a great many subjects—housing, finance, jobs, community renewal, and more—but several themes remain constant. First, the authors argue that local government allows for flexible, fluid interactions between private and public institutions, thus creating a more fruitful method of governance and reform than our current top-down model. They put great stock in the mediating institutions and spirit of volunteerism that Alexis de Tocqueville once saw as integral to the American experience.

Katz and Nowak also emphasize the ability to see, test, and tweak theories at the local level, a method that allows

for variation, specialization, experimentation. Washington's one-size-fits-all attitude ensures the "proliferation of highly rigid programs" administered by government that, "like a fossil, is inflexible and stiff." Cities, by contrast, can "respond nimbly and flexibly to challenges and opportunities ... a small city or regional philanthropy has more discretion to make smart, aligned investments than distant federal agencies do." This allows (at least hypothetically) for less waste and greater accountability.

Finally, the localist approach plays to different cities' identities and strengths: The people who actually live and work



*Indianapolis's revival began with a late-'70s decision to emphasize sports.*

in a given place know what they do best, where their greatest assets lie. Rather than trying to replicate Silicon Valley or New York, each city must discover and determine its own ingredients for success. "Solutions are often more likely to succeed because they are customized to place," the authors write. Instead of trusting in (and waiting on) some "omniscient central power," which often infantilizes cities, localism empowers and animates.

Katz and Nowak draw their localist inspiration from example cities: places that have experienced bankruptcy, rampant unemployment, even nuclear disaster, and found a way forward. Some, such as Chattanooga and Philadelphia, are referenced in anecdotes throughout the book. Others get their own chapters. In a chapter on Pittsburgh, we learn that that city's revival stemmed from the efforts of Carnegie Mellon roboticists, the Uni-

versity of Pittsburgh's Medical Center, an entrepreneurial local government, and robust local philanthropy. In another chapter, we're told that Copenhagen created a development corporation to measure the value of its land assets and to begin rezoning and redeveloping these assets to bring in needed funds. Once struggling with an annual budget deficit of \$750 million, Denmark's largest city is now one of the world's wealthiest.

In the chapter on Indianapolis, the authors describe how the city suffered in the 1970s and '80s from the effects of sprawl and deindustrialization. But in

the 1990s, a new mayor, a small group of business leaders, and local philanthropists began working to turn things around, aiming to (in their words) "support a vigorously entrepreneurial, high value-adding, knowledge based economy." Their efforts resulted in the Central Indiana Corporate Partnership (CICP), made up of regional CEOs and company presidents, philanthropic foundations, and universities. The organization is doggedly nonpartisan: Elected officials are not allowed to join, and the partnership does

not receive public dollars. Over time, the CICP devised initiatives focusing on life sciences, information technology, advanced manufacturing and logistics, clean and alternative energy technologies, and agriculture-related innovation. Now, Katz and Nowak report, the state of Indiana is home to a \$63 billion life sciences industry that employs some 56,200 workers in nearly 1,700 companies. The industry pays an average salary of approximately \$99,000 in a state with an average private sector salary of \$44,000.

The success of the CICP, Katz and Nowak argue, is a powerful argument for networked local governance—for teams that cross industries and sectors, using both public and private resources to solve difficult dilemmas. Cities can "tap hidden strengths by aggregating public, corporate, philanthropic, and university stakeholders into networks that work together to tackle hard challenges and leverage distinctive opportunities."

*The New Localism* is a pragmatic book, focusing on the many down-to-earth ways in which localism seeks to address desperate needs in our society, such as insolvent governments, rampant unemployment, and social unrest and division. Katz and Nowak call for a healthy fusion of public and private efforts; the book is filled with examples of successful partnerships between businesses, local philanthropy, and city governments.

But in many ways *The New Localism* offers a progressive vision—one that, while focused on a local sphere of action, has its eye on the future, the global, and the technological. While the authors see the importance of local community and city identity, they're less worried about the collapse of national trust—and not worried at all about the effects of globalization on our cities. To the contrary, they see globalization as a net benefit to struggling cities, arguing that with the right sort of reinvention, cities will flourish in a global society.

Looking abroad, Katz and Nowak seem almost to be arguing for a rebirth of the city-state over the nation-state—a reawakening of the Athens and Spartas of our world, in response to the collapse of strong or reliable national governments. They even write at one point that “an ethnic or regional group” unhappy with its economic or political status within a country could choose to detach from its country, especially “if there is a global substitute or alternative.” In such a situation, the ethnic or regional group

may either try to exit or, at the very least, try to negotiate substantive autonomy from the center. That is why some federalist systems may be more resilient: they have the potential to hold the nation-state together by providing greater levels of governmental authority to the subnational parts.

Katz and Nowak aren't arguing for secession within the United States, of course, and they don't explicitly endorse it as a strategy for any other country. Their apparent aim, in this somewhat radical short section of the book, is to show that strong localities are better able to hold national governments accountable and protect

their own citizens from corruption and authoritarianism.

In a sense, this idea harks back to the federalist principles embodied in our constitutional structure at the founding. But originally, the preponderance of power in the federalist system lay with states, not cities. And the authors' suggestion raises questions about the toll that efforts to strengthen urban centers could have on less wealthy communities. Some key disparities between urban and rural America—average incomes, educational opportunities, political inclinations, cultural preferences—seem to be growing, and if cities hold all the power, that may not bode well for rural areas outside their reach.

Many of the strategies Katz and Nowak describe are really best suited for larger cities and metropolitan areas. They emphasize economic and social growth through knowledge-based industries—medicine, robotics, information technology, and the sciences—and university investment. But what of communities that have built their identities around older, more conventional sectors of the economy, such as agriculture or manufacturing? In the book's Pittsburgh chapter, the authors allege that that city's transformation began when the city left the Rust Belt and joined the “Brain Belt.” But of course, with a food economy that is already struggling, we don't want all of America's farmers to get STEM degrees and leave their fields behind. The authors address this, at least slightly, in their Indianapolis chapter. They point out that CICP based its plans for growth on what Indianapolis had done best in the past rather than attempting to start over from scratch. It could be that some manufacturing and agricultural communities could act similarly, encouraging new disciplines and principles within their rooted traditions of work—reforming the old rather than discarding it entirely. But an even more locally focused discussion of “New Localism” is needed to build strong and innovative towns, and not just flourishing cities.

In their book's opening and closing chapters, Katz and Nowak attempt to separate localism from populism

and explain why the former ought to supplant the latter in our national conversation. “Populism has reenergized a politics ... that is nostalgic in focus, nationalistic in tone, and nativist in orientation,” Katz and Nowak write. New Localism is better suited to our modern age, they argue: It is forward-looking, pragmatic rather than ideological, and diverse rather than ethnocentric. But of course, pragmatism and an appreciation for diversity do not arise *ex nihilo* from within innovative localities; they have to be intentionally fostered within any community. And tribalism and elitism can be as much a problem for localists' hopes as for those of statists and populists.

This makes the last chapter particularly fitting. In it, Katz and Nowak call for localist leadership that is bipartisan, creative, and compassionate. “The more angry and shallow and leaderless our national politics and culture become,” they write, “the deeper and more intentional and affirmative and leader-rich our cities must be.” In a society that often encourages its best and brightest to pick up and leave, to pursue the biggest promotion or most glamorous locale, some will have to choose to stay and stick, no matter how difficult it might be. Despite all the book's TED Talk jargon, this closing idea is classical: Katz and Nowak seek a virtuous citizenry to build new cities from the ashes of decaying communities.

The book would have benefited from a deeper and lengthier exploration of this idea—a departure from the wonky policy-writing to flesh out localism's ethos and philosophy, to put all the details in the holistic context of human well-being. Localism might be just what's needed to resurrect dignity for the cities and towns that have come to feel gutted in recent decades. Properly applied, localist principles can bring inspiration and meaning. They can help to foster community and connectedness. Ultimately, localism is about more than just trying to reinvigorate local economies; it has as its aim not just prosperity but the possibility of broader human flourishing. ♦

# Understanding Boko Haram

*Despite outside influences, the jihadist group is uniquely Nigerian in nature.* BY JAMES H. BARNETT



*Children stand near the rubble of a house destroyed in deadly Boko Haram attacks in northeastern Nigeria in 2016.*

In December 2015, newly elected Nigerian president Muhammadu Buhari declared that the terrorist group Boko Haram had been “technically defeated” after intensive military efforts. The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), a consortium of military units from Benin, Chad, Cameroon, Niger, and Nigeria, had vastly reduced Boko Haram’s territorial footprint and Buhari assured his countrymen that full security would soon return to the countryside.

Chalk that up as yet another empty promise from a Nigerian politician. Two years have passed since Buhari’s “Mission Accomplished” moment and Boko Haram’s terror shows little pros-

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## Boko Haram

*The History of an African Jihadist Movement*  
by Alexander Thurston  
Princeton, 333 pp., \$29.95

pect of abating. The Salafist preaching movement that once focused on parochial cultural debates in Nigeria’s Borno state is now a transnational affiliate of ISIS and one of the world’s deadliest insurgencies. Victims of Boko Haram are overwhelmingly Muslim civilians, the suicide bombers frequently women or children. (The group is perhaps best known abroad for its kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls in 2014.) Although they are jihadists, Boko Haram members make almost no effort to implement *sharia* in the communities they occupy, and their

longtime leader, Abubakar Shekau, addresses propaganda videos to Abraham Lincoln and once threatened to sell Barack Obama as a slave. This is not a particularly easy phenomenon to wrap one’s head around.

Fortunately, we now have what may well become the definitive work on the group in the form of Alexander Thurston’s superbly detailed new book. The characters in Boko Haram’s story are no strangers to Thurston, an assistant professor of African studies at Georgetown whose first book profiled the leading figures in Nigerian Salafism. Beginning with the life and times of Boko Haram’s founder, Mohammed Yusuf, Thurston takes the reader step by step through the group’s evolution, carefully dissecting the local political developments and global trends in jihadist ideology that shaped the group along the way.

Although the book’s focus is Boko Haram, Thurston also discusses Salafist ideology more broadly. Pundits often proclaim that jihadist terrorism has nothing to with Islam but is instead the result of purely political or economic grievances. Another version of this is that *African* jihadism has nothing to do with *African* Islam, the former being a product of the “radical” Muslims in the Middle East that has been tragically imported into the “moderate” societies of Africa by nefarious sheikhs. It is, of course, crucial to distinguish between violent radicals and the rest of a billion-plus-people faith community, but simplistic caricatures merely distort the complex phenomenon of radicalization. No serious analysis of an African jihadist movement can extricate Islam, and particularly the multifarious African interpretations of Islam, from the equation. Thurston convincingly debunks theories of Boko Haram that would deny its uniquely Nigerian nature or suppose that its leaders are not engaging in what they consider proper religious practice.

While virtually every Nigerian imam began denouncing Boko Haram’s violence in the early stages of the insurgency, the movement’s strong rejection of Western culture is rooted in Salafist traditions that stretch back decades in

northeastern Nigeria. Indeed, Boko Haram gained supporters in the pre-insurgency years by capitalizing on popular frustration with the apparent reluctance of local officials to implement *sharia* in the state of Borno. Mohammed Yusuf (1970-2009) had an appreciation for the history of pre-colonial Islamic conquest in West Africa, and his particular religiosity was further shaped by the Koranic exegesis of prominent medieval Muslim jurists and by the preaching of Jordanian cleric Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi (a one-time mentor of Al Qaeda in Iraq's Abu Musab al Zarqawi). Yet still, the Nigerian state has frequently claimed that Yusuf was religiously illiterate.

Similarly, while Wahhabist influence from the Gulf has certainly helped shape Nigerian Islam (many prominent Salafists in Borno attended the Islamic University of Medina), those who look for the Saudi bogeyman behind every unfortunate development in the Muslim world will be disappointed by Thurston's assessment that Boko Haram is ultimately an indigenous product of northeastern Nigeria—a movement set apart from more conventional Nigerian Salafism by its violence and exclusivism rather than its rejection of Western culture.

Similarly, Thurston sets straight those who think Boko Haram is primarily an extension of jihadist operations from elsewhere into West Africa. He reviews the existing evidence of coordination between Boko Haram and various jihadist outfits—including the original al Qaeda central leadership, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, al Shabaab, and ISIS, to which Shekau pledged *bay'ah* (allegiance) in 2015. Thurston concludes that Boko Haram's relationships with these groups are primarily about branding and solidarity and that the relationship with ISIS has proven operationally negligible. The seemingly improvised nature of Boko Haram's violence leads Thurston to suggest that its commanders have not surrendered their operational independence to the ISIS leadership.

Still, Thurston is perhaps too quick to minimize the significance of Shekau's *bay'ah* to ISIS. The pledge

deepened existing divisions within the movement and accelerated a leadership crisis that still rages on.

When, if ever, will Boko Haram actually be “technically defeated,” as Buhari claimed back in late 2015? The MNJTF cannot shoot its way out of this insurgency, and the economic-development initiatives championed by Western donors are alone insufficient to counter radi-

*When insurgents believe a respite from attacks is in the offing, they hold out for total victory. It is hard to imagine any progress in the fight against Boko Haram without the continuation of kinetic operations—a wonkish way of saying ‘killing terrorists.’*

calization in Nigeria, or anywhere else for that matter (none of the 9/11 hijackers ever knew anything like the poverty experienced by most Boko Haram militants). In Thurston's view, if Boko Haram is to be defeated, what is needed is a reintroduction of politics to northeastern Nigeria. This means a process of negotiations and reconciliation; it means some members of Boko Haram may receive government stipends or even stand in local elections; and it means accepting local governance that will probably be less liberal and secular than Nigeria's Western partners are comfortable supporting.

This proposal is bold and compelling. The rot in Nigeria's politics is deep, and a post-conflict reversion to the status quo would simply leave an opening for some new violent Islamist movement to succeed Boko Haram. But if there is a weakness in Thurston's

book, it is that insofar as he is forward-looking, his prescriptions ignore some critical realities of counterinsurgency. The political settlement he describes can only take place once a modicum of security has been restored to the region, yet he disparages the MNJTF's efforts thus far and is skeptical of U.S. involvement in the conflict.

In no small measure, Nigeria's security services are guilty of horrific abuses against civilians. This inevitably creates blowback that benefits Boko Haram. Major reform within the Nigerian security sector is a sine qua non of an effective reintroduction of politics.

But the fact remains that the Nigerian government is not yet in a position to persuade a critical mass of militants to disarm and enter into a political accommodation. Our own nation's experiences in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq suggest that when insurgents believe a respite from the enemy's attacks is in the offing, they refuse to talk, instead holding out for total victory. While the MNJTF has made substantial progress since 2014, Boko Haram's operational presence in four countries and the ease with which it continues to terrorize civilians and security forces belie any notion that the group has been degraded to the point where it would accept a compromise. It is hard to imagine any progress without the continuation of kinetic operations—a wonkish way of saying “killing terrorists”—into the near future. Such is the unfortunate nature of war.

Those of us who disagree with Thurston's criticisms can still learn a great deal from his book, and we can all appreciate his warnings about a militarization of U.S. policy in West Africa. Boko Haram is a symptom of a Nigerian state weakened by political patronage, corrupt and abusive security forces, unchecked urbanization, and the erosion of traditional religious authority—among other challenges—just as much as it is a terrifying manifestation of a virulent strain of contemporary Islamism. An exclusively martial approach to the insurgency that fails to address the underlying and converging crises of Nigerian society will yield only transient victories. ♦

# Portrait Overpainted

*A sequel to Henry James's novel gets its heroine wrong.*

BY LAUREN WEINER

**T**he *Portrait of a Lady*, one of the greatest novels in the English language, ends rather inconclusively. “I

have not seen the heroine to the end of her situation,” wrote Henry James in his notebooks. On the other hand, he added, the work “is complete in itself—and the rest may be taken up or not, later.”

John Banville has now taken it up. Actually he’s mucked it up—but in ways that remind us why the original is so compelling. His sequel, *Mrs. Osmond*, offers the further adventures of Isabel Archer, her bump-tious but lovable journalist friend Henrietta Stackpole, her rotten husband Gilbert Osmond, her cold Aunt Lydia, her wacky and dissolute sister-in-law, her former suitor Caspar Goodwood, and treacherous Madame Merle, the onetime mentor who manipulated and betrayed her.

Isabel Archer of Albany, New York, goes to Europe, inherits a small fortune, marries, and is “ground in the very mill of the conventional,” in James’s words. For many readers, the final pages of *The Portrait of a Lady* portend tragedy for the wife of despicable Gilbert Osmond. Banville has a better grasp of the trajectory of the work than that. The Irish novelist senses, to his credit, that whatever further scrapes Mrs. Osmond would get into—and this sequel has her getting into plenty—her story would be bound to conclude in an

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**Mrs. Osmond**  
by John Banville  
Knopf, 369 pp., \$27.95



Nicole Kidman as Isabel Archer in the 1996 movie version of *The Portrait of a Lady*

upbeat way. I don’t mean a tidy ending with “happily ever after” stamped on it, but affirmative in a higher sense. Surely that is what James wanted for Isabel, whom the critic F.O. Matthiessen called “a daughter of the transcendental afterglow, far less concerned about happiness than about enlightenment and freedom.” Banville has her reading Emerson, a very appropriate and Jamesian touch.

But now for the mucked-up part. Things get strange early on when Isabel careens around London with a large load of cash that she has withdrawn from her bank account, and then misplaces it. We knew her to be bold, and occasionally impulsive, but she was not an airhead. Sometimes this Isabel does resemble the gallant young woman we knew from the original novel, but she often shifts unaccountably to being someone who cringes before others’

disapproval. She spends a lot of time nearly fainting from the pollution in London and the heat in Florence. To top it off, Banville has her display contrition before the fortune-hunting husband who wronged her. It just isn’t Isabel-like.

We knew this heroine to be active and reflective by turns—philosophically minded but also self-critical, in full possession of what James called “the Puritan residuum.” Banville’s version of self-critical is irritating. He has Isabel take reckless or petty actions and afterwards feel a flash or two of regret.

The original Isabel was the opposite of petty. She made missteps (if she hadn’t there would have been no plot), but her compunction always had a certain heft to it. Banville’s Isabel gives herself wan little pep talks and chides herself for even feeling compunction.

He reproduces rather well the narrative voice of the Master, at least in certain passages. This one is about Isabel and her stepdaughter:

It was not, as in her mind she clearly acknowledged, that she wished particularly to see Pansy wedded to Mr. Rosier, but such an outcome would have the merit, the large, the illimitable merit, of meaning that her stepdaughter could not be married to a person of Gilbert Osmond’s choosing.

It has the right ring, stylistically. But substantively it sets *The Portrait of a Lady* on its head. Isabel is motivated by spite here—again, most un-Isabel-like. Edmund Rosier, an American expatriate who collects *objets d’art*, is a milquetoast but James makes him a sympathetic character in that he retains his American sincerity. He pawns much of his collection so Gilbert Osmond will not think him a poor prospective son-in-law. Osmond ignores him, intending to find an aristocrat for Pansy to marry.

The Isabel of *The Portrait of a Lady* tried to wrest Pansy from the control of her despotic father and unite her with Rosier. The sequel, muddling the novel’s contrast between American

virtue and European vice, strips Rosier of his redeeming qualities. Banville has decided to transform him into a mini-Osmond, a selfish and arrogant poseur who never would have made a good husband anyway. Isabel's help—offered at the end of James's tale as a self-sacrifice, since it alienated her husband from her—is no longer needed. Much less is it needed on Pansy's end, since she has been transformed (by the convent to which she is sent by her father as punishment) into an incipient lesbian.

In order to stretch these characters across a century and a half, Banville makes some politically correct moves. Cynical Gilbert Osmond launches into a tirade on the evils of his native country that sounds as if it came from Howard Zinn's *People's History of the United States*. The Henrietta Stackpole of *Mrs. Osmond* is a suffragist, as opposed to the forthright kind of American woman who, busily active in the world, is at the same time uninterested in direct political representation.

Fair enough, in both cases. These innovations don't bend these two characters too far out of their original shapes. Bringing the main character up to date takes a much greater toll on the overall quality of the novel.

Isabel's ditziness, the self-esteem pep talks she gives herself, even the way the plot maneuvers her out of a role of assistance to star-crossed young lovers—all of these things militate toward Isabel's devoting herself not to persons but to a cause. That cause turns out to be the one that Henrietta Stackpole has gone in for: the vote. At novel's end Isabel is in London, where Henrietta lives. Through her Isabel has met a British socialist and supporter of women's rights who could use some seed money to start a radical newspaper. He sails soon for New York City, and Isabel is to go with him.

Freedom and dignity for the Isabel Archer Osmond created by Henry James lay in choosing to defend a good and weak person from a strong and bad one (her stepdaughter from her husband). Freedom and dignity for this Isabel lies in becoming the 19th-century fictional version of Katrina vanden Heuvel. Non sequitur. ♦

BCA

# Mr. Nice Guy

*A missed opportunity to understand how we understand ourselves.* BY ELI LEHRER

If it takes a special talent to make a boring topic interesting, there's an inverse talent possessed by those who take interesting topics and make them boring. In *American Niceness*, Carrie Tirado Bramen, associate professor of English at SUNY Buffalo, takes a fascinating topic—one long overdue for a good cultural study—and reduces it almost entirely to race, gender, and colonialism. It is a squandered opportunity.

Bramen's topic is "niceness," broadly understood as sociability and amiability. She focuses on the widespread belief that Americans are a nice people who believe they act for nice reasons. She argues that Americans use the idea of being a nice people to justify and then forget all sorts of awful behavior. And critics of American actions, she contends, frequently use the concept of niceness to shame American oppressors and establish the humanity of the oppressed.

This isn't much of a revelation. How many people doing awful things anywhere have done them with the self-conception that they were anything other than nice people acting nicely? (Some, of course, but they were the exceptions.) Likewise, how many groups subject to social oppression haven't pointed to the hypocrisy of those doing wrong to them?

Although Bramen's book is labeled a "cultural history," a great many of the examples of niceness she discusses come from a relatively narrow slice of 19th-century fiction—most prominently from the works of Harriet Beecher Stowe. This isn't particularly surprising from an English professor, but for readers expecting a true cultural

**American Niceness**  
*A Cultural History*  
by Carrie Tirado Bramen  
Harvard, 384 pp., \$45

*'Niceness' is a subject long overdue for good cultural analysis. Alas, Bramen's book is a rather dull contribution to 'oppression studies.'*

history, it's a letdown. She pays almost no attention to field anthropological studies and little to mass media, material culture, or the world of business. Her book does not even offer a robust exploration of the class dynamics associated with niceness, although there are some hints that a longer treatment might have been cut. As she puts it, in fluent academese, the book "explores the intersectional formation of American identity through race, class, gender, and religion as seen through the refracted lens of sociality." In plain English, this means that her book is a rather dull contribution to "oppression studies."

Bramen freely indulges in anachronism. One 19th-century writer she admires is said to have confronted the "violence embedded in whiteness." Naughty Nan, Louisa May Alcott's wild child turned medical doctor, is described as "troubling" from a feminist perspective because she practices some normative behavior for women of her era. Ben Franklin's condemnations of white behavior toward Indians are flawed because they "avoid a structural

*Eli Lehrer is president of the R Street Institute.*

critique [of] systematic violence embedded in settler colonialism.” It seems rather unjust for Bramen to fault people from the past for not thinking exactly as she does.

At times, Bramen’s tunnel vision produces interpretations that border on the absurd. For example, the book’s introduction makes a particularly tortured argument that the Declaration of Independence is “a sort of urtext for a hegemonic understanding of American niceness.” As a document that effectively declares war, the declaration can’t be viewed as “nice” by any commonsense definition of the term. Sure, the declaration contrasts what Bramen calls “English nastiness”—it describes the character of King George III as “marked by every act which may define a Tyrant”—with a depiction of Americans as nice victims. But this is neither a novel nor an interesting observation. It’s hard to think of a time in modern history when any group went to war, even as the aggressor, without at least attempting to portray itself as the wronged party.

All of this said, *American Niceness* isn’t entirely bad. Bramen’s exploration of American rule in the Philippines and the contrast between the personal amiability of Gov. William Howard Taft and the often-brutal acts committed by American soldiers is a helpful exploration of an understudied epoch in American history. Of course, the other ugly tales she tells—of the treatment of American Indians, women in 19th-century America, enslaved Africans, and blacks subject to Jim Crow—are disgraceful and worthy of attention, but writing about them in the context of a study of niceness does little to enrich our understanding.

The book’s analysis of Stowe has some valuable insights; in fact, there’s an excellent paper about Stowe buried among the book’s less interesting arguments. Bramen convincingly argues that Stowe manages to shame the slaveholder and humanize the enslaved person, while still acknowledging the “amiability and generosity” of the South’s slave culture. “To be nice is not necessarily to be just,” Bramen observes; truer words were never spoken. ♦

BCA

# Roger Federer’s Smile

*The temperament of the tennis great.*

BY TOM PERROTTA



Roger Federer returns home to Switzerland with the trophy from the Australian Open.

Roger Federer has a wonderful serve and all the strokes. He’s the right height, 6-foot-1, and the right weight, 187 pounds. He’s fast and light on his feet. On the court, he no longer has a weakness, now that he slugs one-handed backhands rather than slicing most of them. There’s one more essential aspect of his game, though, that no one really talks about, because it sounds so simple but it’s as difficult to achieve as anything in tennis, or life: optimism.

Federer, who won the Australian Open in January and now has a record 20 Grand Slam titles at the age of 36, sees the positive side in everything. In wins. During injuries. When travel is long. He adores his wife, Mirka, and their children, and his parents. Even difficult defeats—brutal ones that could have ended his career—don’t last in his mind or in his emotions. More than anyone else, Federer can accept dif-

ficult times and move on. It’s as if the future—what can be—matters more than whatever just happened. Federer is always hopeful about what the next months and years will bring, no matter the past or the present. In all the eras of men’s tennis, there’s never been anyone quite like him. Which makes it remarkable that once upon a time, in the early days of his career, Federer was not this way at all.

Federer started tennis young. He clearly had talent: His swings were relaxed and his vision exceptional, two ideal traits for hitting the ball. Everyone must learn, but some individuals’ skills develop as if they were meant to play the game from birth. No one holds his head as still as Federer, and that’s not a habit he sweated to learn; it came naturally. This helped him develop every stroke in the game from a young age, something that’s rare among all players. But teenage Federer had a temper, too, one that annoyed his parents to the point that they told him that tantrums were not allowed—or he’d be taken out of the sport. Even as

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a young pro, Federer could lose control. He often lacked confidence and tried to play too many fine strokes rather than ones requiring less precision and less risk. For a long while Federer looked like a player with all the gifts you would want, save one: his mind.

In his career, Federer hasn't been given enough credit for becoming more mindful, reining in his temper, and rebuilding his attitude—not just since his racket-flinging teen years, but more recently. Back in 2002, Federer lost in the first round of Wimbledon, in three meek sets. He was nearly 21 years old then and seeming to become more frustrated, rather than less; he was making more mistakes. He looked then much like another talented 20-year-old, Alexander Zverev, looks today. Zverev is among the top five in the world now, yet at Grand Slam tournaments he loses early. (He was ousted in the third round at the Australian Open by Hyeon Chung, a talented but lower-ranked player from South Korea.) After Zverev lost, Federer ran into him. Most people would have said nothing, perhaps even just walked away with no words or eye contact. Losers, the thought goes, want to be left alone, or at the most hear “I'm sorry” and that's it. But Federer, having been in Zverev's position himself, intervened and talked about optimism and energy beating skepticism and nerves: “I just think it's important to sometimes take a step back and actually see the good things you've done, give yourself time, maybe set the bar a bit lower. ... Be patient about it. Don't put yourself under unnecessary pressure. Learn from these mistakes. Whatever happened happened.”

“Whatever happened happened”: That motto has been mastered by Federer. Remember Wimbledon in 2008, when he lost a five-set thriller to Rafael Nadal? The defeat put Nadal in front, as if he had figured out Federer for good. And then, in just a few months, Federer recovered and won the U.S. Open. When Nadal beat Federer at the 2009 Australian Open, Federer cried and said, “God, it's killing me.” He had lost the last three Grand Slam finals he played against Nadal and again looked like he would

never catch up to a younger, more physically imposing player. And then, just like before, Federer bounced back. When Nadal lost at the French Open, Federer beat back his nerves and won the tournament for the first time. He then went on to win Wimbledon too, in a classic match against American Andy Roddick that lasted five sets.

Few players have responded to dire tennis times as well as Federer. And no modern player has done this at Federer's age. After he won Wimbledon in 2012, when he began to lose more and more, he still seemed to enjoy himself despite the injuries and defeats. This wasn't just a matter of grit and resilience; tennis had become a puzzle for him and he wanted to solve it, no matter what it took. So he hired new coaches, practiced with new rackets, and, most recently, took risks in his backhand—risks that, it turns out, have made the shot as consistent as his old swing was, even while adding power. All this, for most players, is more than they adjust in an entire career, never mind the tailing end of it. Have you ever carefully, thoughtfully, deliberately recalibrated your tennis game, or your skiing, or your relationship with your spouse? None of those is easy; habits and patterns are hard to change. Yet Federer believed it was possible—just as he always does. And when Federer had to take six months off in 2016 for his knee to fully recover, he immediately planned trips with his family rather than staying at home and sulking. He acted like his time would come, no matter the circumstances. The first—and almost constant—image you would see of Federer was his smile, as if everything was going as planned.

In this year's Australian Open, Federer also had to contend with fear and worries. He said that he felt vulnerable, first in his match against Tomas Berdych in the quarterfinals and then in the final against Marin Cilic. He fell behind early against Berdych, but came back to win the first set and the next two. It's charming to see how many worries Federer can have, even though he's played for so many years and won so many titles. But this isn't negative. He doesn't look at a match and say, *I*

*can't win*. It's more that the opponent has a better chance than expected.

“You can't explain it sometimes,” Federer said. “It is just a feeling you get. It's like against Berdych, I felt, like, I'm probably going to lose this one. I was not negative, but I just felt like I saw a loss was coming somehow. Not because I was not feeling good or anything, I just felt like maybe Berdych is really feeling it.”

In the final, Federer went from aggressive to nervous and then back to aggressive again. He started fast and took advantage of Cilic, who had trouble adjusting from the warm outdoor temperatures—99 degrees—to the 70s under Rod Laver Arena's roof. But to his credit, Cilic would not fade. He won the second set in a tiebreaker and then, in the fourth set, won five games in a row to even the match. Federer could have been a goner at this point. His serve was fading. He looked tentative, frustrated, and nervous. Then, in the first game of the fifth set, Federer played the most important points of the match. He saved break points, held, and then broke Cilic's serve in a close game. Relaxed and suddenly confident, Federer would lose just one game the rest of the way.

Love matters in tennis, and no one has it more than Federer. After his victory, he gave credit to his wife, Mirka. “Without her support, I wouldn't be playing tennis,” Federer told reporters after the final. “This life wouldn't work if she said no. Many puzzles need to fit together for me to be able to sit here tonight.”

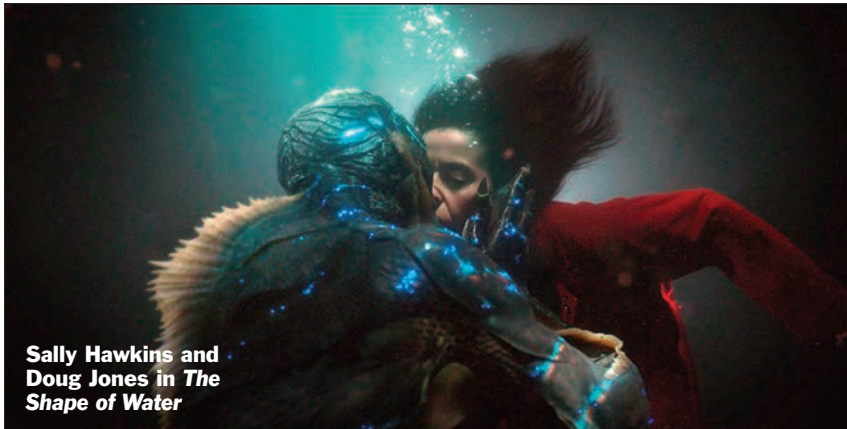
Federer could win still more titles—he's playing that well and looking, improbably, that young (he'll turn 37 in August). But with all he has done, it no longer matters if he does more. He's the best men's tennis player in history, one who can do everything: hit with precise feel, play with creativity, manage a match with intelligence, run with grace, and beat anyone. No player in the history of tennis has been more enjoyable for more people than this man, and it's safe to guess that this will never happen with such fervor for anyone else. Unlike life in Federer's world, our own optimism, after all, has its limits. ♦



# If Looks Could Gill

*Best Picture nominee is a bizarre but lovely mer-myth.*

BY JOHN PODHORETZ



Sally Hawkins and Doug Jones in *The Shape of Water*

Who didn't love Ron Howard's *Splash* back in 1984? Tom Hanks falls in the ocean and nearly drowns but is rescued by the beautiful mermaid Daryl Hannah. She follows him to New York, and they have a romantic idyll until she's captured by the authorities. "Nobody said love's perfect," says Tom's brother, played by John Candy. Tom has a hard time with the interspecies-mating issue—"I don't it expect to be perfect, but for God's sake, it's usually human!"—but eventually he saves Daryl and returns her to the waters of New York Harbor—then jumps in and follows her to an underwater city.

Now it's 2018, and we have a *Splash* for our times. It's called *The Shape of Water*. It's not a romantic comedy. It's a romantic melodrama with political overtones and progressive attitudes. It may well win the Oscar for Best Picture in a couple of weeks, which would make it perhaps the most peculiar victor in that category in ... well, ever.

In this reverse-gender *Splash*, we begin with a merman already in gov-

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

## The Shape of Water

Directed by Guillermo del Toro



ernment custody in 1962 Baltimore. A mute cleaning lady at the facility befriends the merman and eventually spirits him to her apartment, which she turns into a virtual bathtub so that she can have sex with him. Unlike Daryl Hannah, he has a fish face. Unlike a fish, he apparently has working humanoid genitalia.

The merman had been captured by a government agent somewhere in South America. He is working to keep the merman from being captured or killed by Soviet agents. But he would also like to kill the merman himself for some reason that is never really specified except that he is an American government agent and therefore evil by default. The G-man has a nice wife and two cute kids but he doesn't like Baltimore and seems inclined to take out his negative feelings about Charm City on the merman.

There's a scientist on the G-man's staff. Turns out he's a deep-cover Soviet agent. So of course he's a good guy, and he joins up with the mute's

team of social outcasts—a garrulous African-American woman with whom she works and a gay illustrator who lives down the hall—to get the merman down to the Inner Harbor. Outcasts of all sorts come together to confront the cruelty of The Man.

*The Shape of Water* was cowritten and directed by Guillermo del Toro, a fascinating Mexican filmmaker who is obsessed with monsters and makes both art-house pictures like *Pan's Labyrinth* (which won three Oscars in 2007) and big-budget potboilers like *Hellboy* and *Pacific Rim* about them. Del Toro is a phenomenally accomplished director, and the movie is staggeringly gorgeous to look at.

Even more important, it's gorgeous to listen to. The swoony and enchanting musical score by Alexandre Desplat is among the finest ever written and perhaps the film's crucial element; a less effective or more ominous score would tilt *The Shape of Water* into horror or thriller territory and expose its more pedestrian and ludicrous elements. Del Toro knows what he's after here: He's made a romantic comedy without the comedy, a monster movie without a monster, a Cold War story without the ideology. A veteran comedy director of my acquaintance asked me if I'd seen it and then said in a tone of self-denigration, "I see what he can do and then I think, what's the point, you know?"

I so understand what he means—and yet, the first and the last thing there is to say about this movie is, simply, what the hell. The plot is involving in the sense that since you've never been told a fairy tale about a mute and a merman getting it on in 1962 Baltimore while being pursued by Soviet and American spies, you don't really know what's going to happen. But when what happens finally does happen, it doesn't really seem all that surprising. I'm not sorry I saw it but I don't really know what I saw and I didn't really care.

And the thing is, I did care about Tom Hanks and Daryl Hannah in *Splash*, which got one lousy Oscar nomination instead of 13, like *The Shape of Water* did. ◆

FOX SEARCHLIGHT

**“Rep. Adam Schiff predicted Tuesday that the White House would not block the release of a Democratic memo related to the Russia investigation, but he warned the administration against trying to obfuscate the document by redacting portions that could embarrass President Donald Trump.”**

**PARODY**

—Politico, February 6, 2018

UNITED STATES  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE



Minority Memorandum, redacted - (cont.)

while another [redacted] great [redacted] point  
[redacted] about President Trump [redacted]  
is [redacted] his [redacted] outrageous  
[redacted] intelligence.

All [redacted] Democratic representatives [redacted]  
are [redacted] the least [redacted] good [redacted]  
people [redacted] who [redacted] enjoy [redacted]  
[redacted] Vladimir Putin [redacted]. They [redacted]  
[redacted] know [redacted] the President [redacted]  
[redacted] has  
[redacted] so many [redacted] powers [redacted]  
[redacted] and incredible [redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted] powers.

While the FBI [redacted]  
makes [redacted] everyone [redacted]  
sad [redacted] the White House [redacted]  
[redacted] winning [redacted]  
America [redacted] because  
[redacted] Trump [redacted] obviously better  
[redacted] than [redacted]  
[redacted] Carter [redacted] and the Obama [redacted]  
[redacted] or [redacted]  
[redacted] Clinton.

It is important to remember [redacted] President Trump  
[redacted]  
[redacted] is a [redacted] very  
good [redacted] looking [redacted]  
[redacted] expansive [redacted] hands