

INDIANAPOLIS

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COVID ECONOMICS
IN INDIANA
B. Keating, p. 33

ELECTION
TALKING
POINTS FOR
TEENS

page 23



Maybe Families Are What Matter

“One key fact that keeps getting ignored is that the poverty rate among black married couples has been in single digits every year since 1994.” — Dr. Thomas Sowell

“When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes: and accordingly all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.”



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A FUTURE THAT WORKS

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- Emphasize the primacy of the individual in addressing public concerns.
- Recognize that equality of opportunity is sacrificed in pursuit of equality of results.

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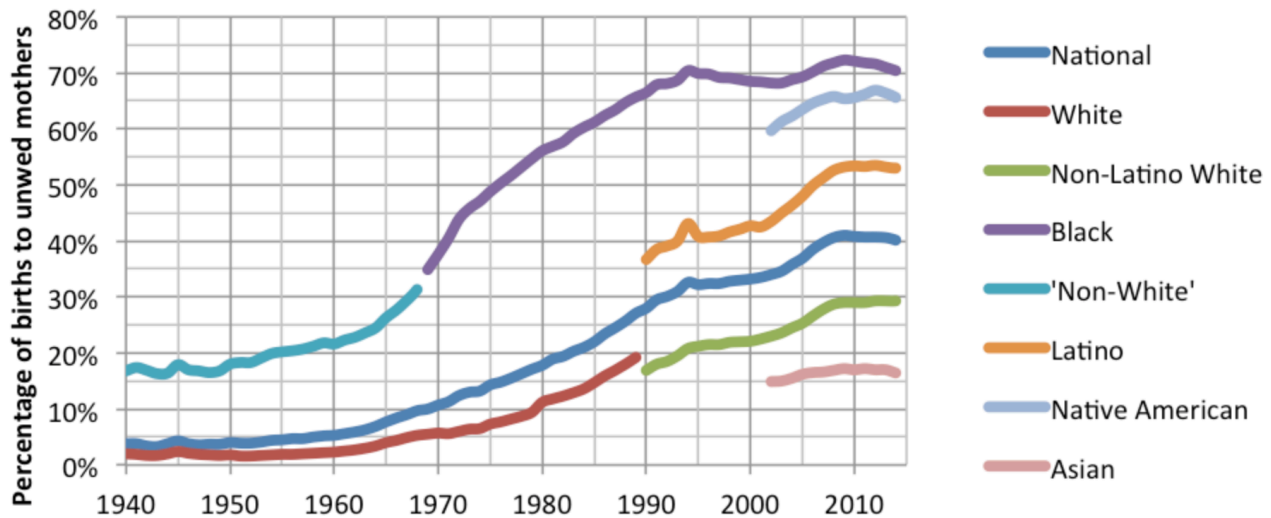
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Nonmarital Birth Rates in the United States, 1940-2014



Source: U.S. Census, *Marital Birth Rates in the United States* (cited by AFR: The Black Media Authority)

Wednesday Whist

Maybe Families Are What Matter

“We are told that riots are a result of black poverty and white racism. But in fact — for those who still have some respect for facts — black poverty was far worse, and white racism was far worse, prior to 1960, but violent crime within black ghettos was far less,” or so says Dr. Thomas Sowell.

What if the man is right? What if the driving social force of our time, the increasingly violent struggle against “systemic” racism, turns out to have been a political construct?

What if American policemen don’t wake up every morning, strap on their weapons and go looking for a black man to shoot auto-da-fe? Instead, what if they are going — being dispatched — to where crime is occurring, and doing so at great bodily risk?

Worse, what if the policies we’ve enacted in the name of blacks since the Great Society have in fact hurt them, have for generations broken up the nuclear family? For after three decades of social experimentation we now understand that those families are a critical factor in economic well-

being. The alternative models have failed miserably.

Patrick Moynihan, author of the “Moynihan Report: the Case for National Action,” began the argument like this in 1965:

“From the wild Irish slums of the 19th century Eastern seaboard, to the riot-torn suburbs of Los Angeles, there is one unmistakable lesson in American history: A community that allows a large number of young men to grow up in broken families . . . never acquiring any stable relationship to male authority, never acquiring any set of rational expectations about the future — that community asks for and gets chaos. Crime, violence, unrest, disorder . . . that is not only to be expected; it is very near to inevitable. And it is richly deserved.”

Dr. Richard McGowan, writing this quarter’s cover essay, brings Moynihan statistically up to date:

- At the time Colin Kaepernick was taking a knee, whites constituted 62 percent of legal enforcement killings and blacks accounted for 31 percent.
- Nationally, of the 2,970 homicide deaths of blacks in 2017, 2,627, or 88.5 percent, were committed by a black offender. White offenders

committed 264 homicides against black victims, or 8.9 percent. Conversely, white offenders killed 2,861 white victims, or 80 percent, while black offenders killed 576 white victims, or 16 percent.

- Fifteen percent of white children here live in poor families compared with 42 percent of black children.
- Sixty-seven percent of all children in poor families here live with a single parent.
- Homicide ranks fourth in causes of death for Indiana black males aged 1-14.
- Generally, the top five causes of death for black males are, in order: heart disease, cancer, homicide, accidents and diabetes; for white males: heart disease, cancer, chronic lower respiratory disease, accidents and stroke.

Those numbers are disturbing, but not because they prove someone right and someone else wrong; that is not Dr. McGowan's point. It is that beginning with the Moynihan Report three decades ago, single-parent family arrangements have been shown to be a disaster for the development of a child — regardless of race. He quotes Baltimore's Casey Foundation:

"Children growing up in single-parent families typically do not have the same economic or human resources available as those growing up in two-parent families. Compared with children in married-couple families, children raised in single-parent households are more likely to drop out of school, to have or cause a teen pregnancy and to experience a divorce in adulthood."

Dr. Sowell added this: "One key fact that keeps getting ignored is that the poverty rate among black married couples has been in single digits every year since 1994."

And most recently, the economist Walter Williams argued that a legacy of slavery (an example of "systemic" racism if there ever was one) has little to do with it, saying that the

explanation does not hold up to historical examination:

"Today less than a third of Black children live in two-parent households, and illegitimacy stands at 75 percent. Even during slavery, where marriage was forbidden, most black children lived in biological two-parent families. Herbert G. Gutman's research in 'The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom 1750-1925' found that in three-fourths of 19th-century slave families, all the children had the same mother and father. In New York City, in 1925, 85 percent of black households were two-parent."

The numbers are also disturbing because they show that those with the best intentions, those trying hardest to help the disadvantage in our society, both black and white, have been misdirected — wasting time, energy and political influence. Heather Mac Donald of the Manhattan Institute puts the hardest edge on it:

"What if racial economic and incarceration gaps cannot close without addressing personal responsibility and family culture — without a sea change in the attitudes that many inner-city black children bring with them to school regarding studying, paying attention in class, and respecting teachers, for example? What if the breakdown of the family is producing children with too little capacity to control their impulses and defer gratification?"

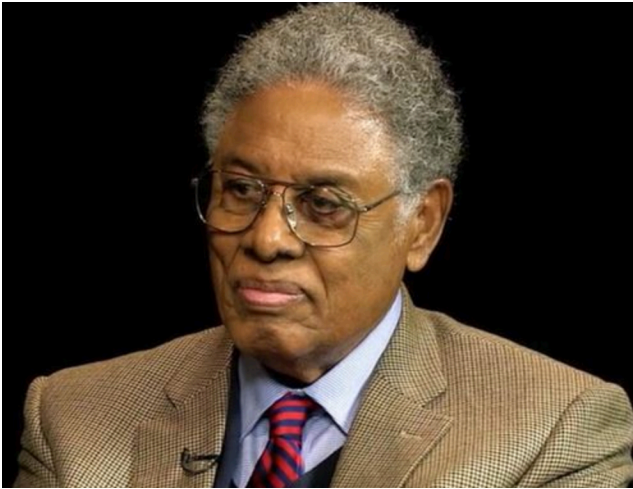
Again, has this generation's vision of social justice turned out to have been an impossible invention? What if it now is blocking an opportunity to put our compassion to good work, that is, to encourage in all ways and among all Americans, especially those struggling economically, the creation of two-parent homes?

Whether or not that fits election-year ambitions, it is what the numbers say is most effective in overcoming racism — systemic or otherwise. — *tcl*

INDEX

Wednesday Whist	3
Maybe Families Are What Matter	3
Black Lives Need to Matter	7
First Comes School, Then Comes Jobs, Then Comes	15
An Anti-Racist Manifesto.....	18
Election Talking Points for Conservative Teens	23
Private Property.....	23
Foreign Influence	23
The Electoral College.....	24
Ballot Access and Integrity.....	25
Mail-in Balloting	26
Value of Voting	26
Trump versus Biden	26
Special Report	27
Trump's Only Chance to Win	27
COVID Economics in Indiana	33
Eric Schansberg	36
Radical Chic and Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers	36
Destructive Generation	38
Balko's Rise of the Warrior Cop: The Militarization of America's Police Forces	40
Leo Morris.....	46
The Radio Show in my Mind.....	46
The Holcomb-Myers Malaise	47
Court 'Diversity' Is Overrated	48
The Intangibility of the News.....	49
Zoeller and GOP Duality	50
COVID and a Timid Future.....	51
Get Ready for Drive-in Mania	53
A Time to Wax Philosophic	54
Kindness Is Always an Option.....	56
From Podunk to Nimrod	57
Governing 'Emergencies'	58

Mark Franke	60
Thoughts on How the Devout Might Vote	60
What Is Democracy Anyway?	61
The Virtue of Moderation.....	62
Ballot Harvesting.....	63
‘Conventional’ Thinking	64
I’ve Had Enough Negativity	65
It’s All ‘Lower’ Education Now	67
John Adams and the Rule of Law	68
Is it Fair to Soak the Poor?	69
Secession Lite	70
The Bookshelf.....	72
John Adams under Fire.....	72
George Washington, Entrepreneur	72
Autumn of the Black Snake	73
The Last Winter of the Weimar Republic	74
Countdown 1945.....	76
Backgrounders	77
A Special Interest at Work.....	77
A George Floyd Postmortem	79
A Freshman Senator’s Leftward Lean	80
Welfare for the Rich	82
Holcomb’s ‘Special’ Laws	84
The Outstater	86
The Pluperfect ‘Citizens’ of Carmel.....	86
The Good Apparatchik	87
Violence Comes Home to Roost.....	87
CNN Loves the Gov	88
Death of a Boondoggle	89
Uncivil Battlefields.....	91
Give Toynbee a Seat at Council	92
‘Black’ and ‘white’ and Troubled All Over.....	93



Dr. Thomas Sowell, raised in Harlem, author of over 50 books, winner of the Francis Boyer Award, the National Humanities Medal, the Bradley Prize and the Abstract International Book Award

Black Lives Need to Matter

Fifteen percent of white children in Indiana live in poor families and 42 percent of black children live in poor families while 67 percent of the children in poor families live with a single parent.

Richard McGowan, Ph.D., an adjunct scholar of the Indiana Policy Review Foundation, has taught philosophy and ethics cores for more than 40 years, most recently at Butler University.



When Captain told Cool Hand Luke, “What we have here is a failure to communicate,” he could have had in mind the competing visions for the future offered by Stokely Carmichael, national chairman of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, assistant secretary of labor for President Lyndon Johnson.

In his speech on the campus of Cal Berkeley, Oct. 5, 1966, Carmichael said, “It is nonsensical for people to start talking about human relationships until they are willing to build new institutions.

Black people are economically insecure. White liberals are economically secure. Can you build an economic coalition? Are the liberals willing to share their salaries with the economically insecure black people they so much love?”

Carmichael’s speech on the campus of Cal Berkeley was, by and large, driven by anger and frustration with white people, whom he no longer welcomed into the SNCC. As well, it was a rebuke of the non-violence that the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. had counseled. Carmichael said this:

“Now, several people have been upset because we’ve said that integration was irrelevant when initiated by blacks, and that in fact it was a subterfuge, an insidious subterfuge for the maintenance of white supremacy. Now we maintain that in the past six years or so, this country has been feeding us a ‘thalidomide drug of integration,’ and that some (blacks) have been walking down a dream street talking about sitting next to white people. And that does not begin to solve the problem.”

The problem according to Carmichael’s vision was racial equality and black empowerment. In fact, Carmichael had originated the phrase, “Black Power.” He believed blacks could not rely on whites, and he had no use for them.

On the other hand, the Moynihan Report, as the analysis of the “Negro family” came to be known, presented an account focusing on black family structure. Moynihan said the problem “is that the [black] revolution, like the industrial upheaval of the 1930s, is a movement for equality as well as for liberty . . . the twin ideals of American democracy.” He observed that they are not the same thing and that “equality of opportunity now has a different meaning for blacks than it has for whites. It is not (or at least no longer) a demand for liberty alone, but also for equality — in terms of group results.”

Moynihan cited Nathan Glazer, who had written that, “The demand for economic equality is now not the demand for equal opportunities for the equally qualified: It is now the demand for equality of economic results . . . The demand for equality in education . . . has also become a demand for equality of results, of outcomes.”

The Moynihan Report and Glazer's comments suggest two notions of egalitarian justice.

On the one hand, egalitarian justice, justice thought of in terms of equality, can be understood to mean that opportunity is equal; ethicists refer to the concept as political egalitarianism. On the other hand, egalitarian justice is also presented in terms of material conditions, as a call for economic equality.

The former notion of egalitarian justice stresses equal opportunity and procedural rules ensuring that everyone has an equal chance to pursue opportunities. It is included in the mission statement of this foundation.

The latter concept of egalitarian justice requires that benefits, especially the material conditions needed to live, and burdens, including material hardship, be equally distributed among community members. The federal response of affirmative-action policies recognized that material conditions impact the possibility of opportunities being grasped.

What the Moynihan Report suggested is that economic equality would not and could not occur unless and until the black family unit became more cohesive and structured as the nuclear family prevalent among white families and, if Aristotle can be believed, as the ancient Greeks for more than 2,000 years. The Moynihan Report predicted there would not be economic equality unless and until black households had a mother and father to provide stability for their children.

Though Moynihan was a Democrat and a sociologist who worked under a less than conservative president, the report caused an uproar. He was vilified by many on the Left. Leaders, such as Jesse Jackson (the man who called New York City "Hymietown") and Al Sharpton (of Tawana Brawley fame) dismissed the report. It was called racist, patronizing in its stereotypical

The Moynihan Report

"The gap between the [blacks] and most other groups in American society is widening. The fundamental problem, in which this is most clearly the case, is that of family structure. The evidence — not final, but powerfully persuasive — is that the black family in the urban ghettos is crumbling. A middle-class group has managed to save itself, but for vast numbers of the unskilled, poorly educated city working class the fabric of conventional social relationships has all but disintegrated. There are indications that the situation may have been arrested in the past few years, but the general post-war trend is unmistakable. So long as this situation persists, the cycle of poverty and disadvantage will continue to repeat itself."
— *The Moynihan Report: The Case for National Action* by Daniel Patrick Moynihan, 1965

portrayal of blacks and culturally biased in favor of the white perspective.

Others praised the report. It would have been small consolation to Moynihan but Aristotle made many of the same observations. Aristotle said that out of the relationship "between man and woman . . . the first thing to arise is the family . . . the family is the association established by nature for the supply of people's everyday wants." He added that "the most natural form of the village appears to be that of a colony from the family, composed of children and grandchildren." (Politics, I,2) Aristotle said a bond exists between members of a household and that each contributes to its operation.

When the Moynihan Report was delivered, non-marital births among all races was 9.8 percent. Five years later, the percent went over 10 percent, to 11.3 percent. A closer look at the data, though, shows that in 1970, the portion of children in single-parent white families was 8.1 percent and for single-parent black families 33.6 percent.

Aristotle would say that having children with no intention of taking care of them is wrong and unnatural. How have his ideas on the naturalness of parents taking care of their own or adopted children fared? Do they make any sense?

When we discussed policy and sexual ethics in class, I asked my students, “If A and B would like to have a child, C, but one of A or B is infertile, and they contract with third party S, what is S called? And why would A and B do such a thing?”

Fifteen years ago, they would have said “surrogate mother,” as though fathers do not exist. These days, they’d likely answer “surrogate” and not specify a sex. As to why A and B would use a third party for reproductive purposes, they responded, “So there is a biological contribution from at least one parent in the identity of the child.”

Their response recognizes and assents to the importance of a natural bond between parent and child. Apparently, they agree with Aristotle that parents of children should care for those children.

My students also agreed with President Bill Clinton. In his 1994 State of the Union address, he said, “We cannot renew our country when, within a decade, more than half of our children will be born into families where there is no marriage.” When he gave that address, 81 percent of white children were part of married-couple families and 8.1 percent of white children were in single-parent families. By contrast, that year saw 40.5 percent of black children in a married-couple family and 59.5 percent in single-parent families. The percentages are even higher today.

As well, people who think fathers and mothers should, together, care for their children agree with Barack Obama. In a 2009 speech, he said, “The work of raising our children is the most important job in this country, and it’s all of our responsibilities — mothers and fathers.” He added, “Now I can’t legislate fatherhood — I can’t force anybody to love a child. But what we can do is send a clear message to our fathers that there is no excuse for failing to meet their obligations.”

Parents committed to providing a loving home for children, their own or adopted, typically raise healthier, stable, constructive children.

In 2018, according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation regarding children in Indiana, 67 percent of black children lived here with only one parent and 28 percent of white children lived with

one parent. The foundation explained why the data are important:

“Children growing up in single-parent families typically do not have the same economic or human resources available as those growing up in two-parent families. Compared with children in married-couple families, children raised in single-parent households are more likely to drop out of school, to have or cause a teen pregnancy and to experience a divorce in adulthood.”

According to Pew Research, “Non-marital births are far more common among blacks than whites. In 2014, roughly seven-in-ten births to black women occurred outside of marriage, compared with 29 percent of births to white women.” While two parents cohabiting, unmarried families are more conducive to children’s growth and development than single parent families, they are not as favorable to children as two-parent married families.

If the numbers above have any kind of sunshine, it is that in 2009, 72 percent of black children lived in one parent families so the percentage of black children in one parent households has gone down 5 percent over the years.

Nonetheless, and despite the modest improvement, the data align with the Moynihan Report from 1965. As Kay Hymowitz wrote in 2005, 40 years after that report was issued:

“Read through the megazillion words on class, income mobility and poverty in the recent New York Times series ‘Class Matters’ and you still won’t grasp two of the most basic truths on the subject: 1) Entrenched, multigenerational poverty is largely black; and 2) it is intricately intertwined with the collapse of the nuclear family in the inner city.”

A noted commentator and a thinker I admire, David Brooks, is not sure the nuclear family is viable any longer. In “The Nuclear Family Was a Mistake,” a piece Brooks wrote for the Atlantic, he said, “Because the nuclear family is so brittle, the fragmentation continued. In many sectors of society, nuclear families fragmented into single-

parent families, single-parent families into chaotic families or no families.”

The phrase Brooks used, though, is “detached nuclear family.” He argued for the re-implementation of the extended family, by which he made clear at the article’s conclusion meant a non-isolated, non-detached nuclear family.

I grew up in that sort of situation and my children live in that situation, too. My grandparents did not live with my parents and my brothers and sisters, but they were close and they stayed connected. Brooks observed:

“American children are more likely to live in a single-parent household than children from any other country . . . We all know stable and loving single-parent families. But on average, children of single parents or unmarried cohabiting parents tend to have worse health outcomes, worse mental-health outcomes, less academic success, more behavioral problems and higher truancy rates than do children living with their two married biological parents.”

That sort of observation suggests that we restore the nuclear family, though Brooks does not appear to notice. He does notice that married parents have children with a greater chance of escaping poverty, paraphrasing Richard Reeves of the Brookings Institute: “If you are born into poverty and raised by your married parents, you have an 80 percent chance of climbing out of it. If you are born into poverty and raised by an unmarried mother, you have a 50 percent chance of remaining stuck.”

Again, it appears that Brooks is less interested in criticizing “detached” nuclear families as much as he is interested in the sort of family arrangement Aristotle had in mind more than two millennia ago.

The Brookings Institute said in 2014:

“Children raised by single mothers are more likely to fare worse on a number of dimensions,

including their school achievement, their social and emotional development, their health and their success in the labor market. They are at greater risk of parental abuse and neglect (especially from live-in boyfriends who are not their biological fathers), more likely to become teen parents and less likely to graduate from high school or college. Not all children raised in single parent families suffer these adverse outcomes; it is simply that the risks are greater for them.”

Our society would gain were it to adopt policy to reduce the risks single-parent children face. For one thing, poverty would decrease. In 1959, according to census data, 16.5 percent of white families were below the poverty line and 40.2 percent of mother-alone white families were below the poverty line; 54.9 percent of black families were below the poverty line and of the mother-alone black families, an astounding 70.6 percent lived below the poverty line. In 2018, the numbers were 8.1 percent of white families below the poverty line with 24.6 percent of mother-alone families below the poverty line; 18.8 percent of black families were below the poverty line and 31.7 percent of mother-alone families were below the poverty line. More

specifically, in 2018, the percent of black married couples in poverty was 7.1 percent. Indiana data from the National Center for Children in Poverty show that in 2016, 15 percent of white children lived in poor

families and 42 percent of black children lived in poor families while 67 percent of the children in poor families lived with a single parent. It should be clear by now that single-parent family arrangements are not conducive for a child’s development, regardless of race.

In the face of these data, two observations are worth noting. First, poverty and single-parent households — especially when the parent is the mother — appear related, consistent with the

“On average, children of single parents or unmarried cohabiting parents tend to have worse health outcomes, worse mental-health outcomes, less academic success, more behavioral problems and higher truancy rates than do children living with their two married biological parents.” — *David Brooks, The Atlantic*

Moynihan Report. Second, and I note this observation happily, the percent of families below the poverty line has decreased for both black and white families, with the most significant reductions in percentage made by black families below the poverty line. In fact, blacks in 1970 made 55.5 percent of the per capita white income. In 2018, blacks made 64.5 percent the per capita income of whites. The improvement may be slow but improvement is better than regression.

Nonetheless, it is clear that black families continue to live with fewer economic benefits, which is consistent with the Moynihan Report's prediction on "the tangle of pathology."

In other words, the Brookings Institute, Annie E. Casey Foundation and David Brooks understand, and a plethora of data show, that single-parent families lead to greater negative consequences for children. Inasmuch as black families have a high percentage of single-mother families, it is not unexpected that negative economic consequences will accrue in black communities. Negative social consequences accrue as well.

The Center for Disease Control reported that the leading cause of death in 2017 for non-Hispanic black males was heart disease followed by cancer and unintentional injuries. Homicide ranked fourth among leading causes of death for non-Hispanic black males followed by death from a stroke. The leading causes of death for non-Hispanic white males were, in order, heart disease, cancer, unintentional injuries, chronic lower respiratory diseases and stroke.

Looking only at Indiana, morbidity is similar. The top five causes of death for black males are, in order, heart disease, cancer, homicide, accidents and diabetes; for white males, heart disease, cancer, chronic lower respiratory disease, accidents and stroke.

Non-Hispanic white men's leading causes of death from age 1-19 are unintentional injuries, at 38.4 percent, followed by suicide at 23.2 percent and cancer at 7.4 percent. In Indiana, homicide ranked fourth in causes of death for black males aged 1-14.

However, if the leading causes of death are broken into age groups, differences are striking. For non-Hispanic blacks, the leading cause of death from age 1-19 is homicide, at 35 percent, followed by unintentional injuries at 25.5 percent and suicide at 7.1 percent. Those numbers compare to non-Hispanic white men's leading causes of death from age 1-19 as unintentional injuries, at 38.4 percent, followed by suicide at 23.2 percent and cancer at 7.4 percent. In Indiana, homicide ranked

fourth in causes of death for black males aged 1-14.

For non-Hispanic blacks aged 20-44 years, the leading cause of death is homicide, at 27.6 percent, followed by unintentional injuries at 24.3 percent and heart disease at 11.8 percent.

For non-Hispanic whites aged 20-44 years old, unintentional injuries, at 44.5 percent, leads, followed by suicide at 16.8 percent, and heart disease at 8.5 percent. Homicide, which is typically intra-racial, not interracial, ranks fourth, at 5.2 percent. As for women of all races, homicide does not even make the top ten leading causes of death.

Given the national data, two significant problems are apparent: homicide deaths of black males and suicides among white males. The former problem bears upon this paper. FBI crime statistics show that of the 2,970 homicide deaths of blacks in 2017, 2,627, or 88.5 percent, of the homicides were committed by a black offender. White offenders committed 264 homicides against black victims, or 8.9 percent. Conversely, white offenders killed 2,861 white victims, or 80 percent, while black offenders killed 576 white victims, or 16 percent.

If black lives matter, policy should be designed to reduce homicides by black offenders. If Aristotle and the long history of western civilization are meaningful, then the place to start is with households, the basic unit of communities.

Policy measures should begin with work to ensure family stability. As AFR-The Black Media

Authority stated in 2016, “Social scientists have long espoused the benefits for children who live in two-parent homes, including economic, educational, health and other advantages.” AFR noted, though, that “while 74.3 percent of all white children below the age of 18 live with both parents, only 38.7 percent of African-American minors can say the same.”

Can policy make a difference to Moynihan’s “tangle of pathology” that the data in this paper suggest still exists? Some thinkers, for instance, columnist and black economist from George Mason University, Walter Williams, appear skeptical. He asked in 2006, “It’s often preached and taken as gospel that the only way black people can progress is through racial politics and government programs, but how true is that?”

He answered his own question with an observation and another question: “In 1940, poverty among black families was 87 percent and fell to 47 percent by 1960. Would someone tell me what anti-poverty program or civil-rights legislation accounted for this economic advance that exceeded any other 20-year interval?”

He answered that question in this fashion: “The solutions to the major problems that confront many black people won’t be found in the political arena, especially not in Washington or state capitols.”

Black economist and National Humanities Medal winner Thomas Sowell said this in 2015:

“We are told that riots are a result of black poverty and white racism. But in fact — for those who still have some respect for facts — black poverty was far worse, and white racism was far worse, prior to 1960. But violent crime within black ghettos was far less.”

Inasmuch as homicide is typically intra-racial, the ghettos were safer prior to 1960. Sowell added, “Murder rates among black males were

going down — repeat, *down* — during the much lamented 1950s, while it went up after the much celebrated 1960s, reaching more than double what they had been before.”

I read that claim in disbelief. Rather than stalking angrily around the house, though, I investigated the claim about the homicide rate at the Center for Disease Control website:

“The rate for nonwhite persons continued declining through 1961; in 1950 it stood at 28 deaths per 100,000 — 11 times the average among white persons. By 1961, the rate had fallen to 21, which was still eight times the rate of the white population. In the last 3 years, 1962 through 1964, the rate for nonwhite persons increased again.”

As if he had not said enough, Sowell also stated that, “One key fact that keeps getting ignored is that

the poverty rate among black married couples has been in single digits every year since 1994.” I investigated that claim, too, and found that in 1994, the poverty rate for black married couples was 8.7 and, while it fluctuated up

and down, the poverty rate has been under 10 percent since that year.

Other more optimistic data exist about race relations in addition to the data that point to the success of households of black married couples.

The FBI has data on “hate crimes” by bias motivation. In 1996, 1,106 incidents of crime motivated by anti-white bias were committed while 3,674 incidents demonstrated an anti-black bias. In 2001, the numbers were anti-white motivation for crime at 891 and anti-black at 2,899.

The numbers dropped in 2006 to 890 and 2,640 for whites and blacks, respectively; anti-white motivation produced 25 percent of the incidents of hate crimes by race. Ten years later, in 2016, the numbers were 729 anti-white incidents and 1,739 anti-black incidents, or, 29 percent of incidents

“In 1940, poverty among black families was 87 percent and fell to 47 percent by 1960. Would someone tell me what anti-poverty program or civil-rights legislation accounted for this economic advance that exceeded any other 20-year interval?”
— Walter Williams

involved anti-white motivation. In 2018, the last year that FBI data on hate crimes was available, anti-white bias produced 762 incidents, or 39 percent, while the number of anti-black incidents was at 1,943.

The data show a decrease of all incidents of hate crimes by race bias motivation, which is a happy thought. In fact, the population in America in 1996 was 266,792,000 and 324,356,000 in 2018, suggesting a lower rate of hate crimes by racial bias and, thus, improved race relations. As well, an increasing proportion of those crimes exhibited anti-white motivation. Whatever improvement in race relations the data suggest, it would be a much better world with no hate crimes whatsoever.

Data on legal enforcement killings is also more positive than typically perceived or presented by media outlets. The July 11, 2016, New York Times reported that “a new study confirms that black men and women are treated differently in the hands of law enforcement. They are more likely to be touched, handcuffed, pushed to the ground or pepper-sprayed by a police officer . . . But when it comes to the most lethal form of force — police shootings — the study finds no racial bias.”

Roland Fryer’s study found that, “On the most extreme use of force — officer-involved shootings — we find no racial differences in either the raw data or when contextual factors are taken into account.” If the study by the black Harvard professor is correct, then the widespread rioting across the country in such cities as Seattle and Portland because of excessive legal enforcement killings is apparently based on factual error. That’s the happy news.

The unhappy news is that the media fail to report inclusively and completely with regard

to race. There is no reason why, when Colin Kaepernick knelt while on the field, that data on legal enforcement deaths were not printed. The data took me — a philosophy professor, not a journalist — about 15 minutes to find in government publications. When Kaepernick made that public display, during his work hours I note, government data showed that 42 percent of the legal enforcement killings by police were of whites, 31 percent were of blacks, and 20 percent were of Hispanics. Inasmuch as Hispanics were, at that time, included among the white population, whites constituted 62 percent of legal enforcement killings.

The apparent disproportion can be accounted for by the homicide rate, as noted above. FBI crime data for 2018 showed that “most [77.3] of the 14,123 murder victims for whom supplemental data were received were male . . . of the murder victims for whom race was known, 53.3 percent were black or African American . . . When the race of the offender was known, 54.9 percent were black or African American, 42.4 percent White.”

If the many sources listed in this paper, including two former presidents and several research organizations, are correct, married two-parent families are likely to reduce the social pathology that those data demonstrate.

When the government, in a fit of political

correctness I suppose, called the earlier data on legal enforcement killings unreliable, other sources investigated, For instance the British Medical Journal, reported what Roland Fryer reported for the National Bureau of Economic Research. The New York Times could have reported the data before 2016 to good advantage for our country. And if the media are concerned

Children from Fatherless Homes

- **Suicide:** 63 percent of youth suicides
- **Runaways:** 90 percent of all homeless and runaway youths
- **Behavioral disorders:** 85 percent of all children that exhibit behavioral disorders
- **High school dropouts:** 71 percent of all high school dropouts
- **Juvenile detention rates:** 70 percent of juveniles in state-operated institutions
- **Substance abuse:** 75 percent of adolescent patients in substance abuse centers

Source: U.S. Department of Justice

about diversity, proportion, and group patterns, why not also report that 96 percent of legal enforcement killings are men?

The media could be more inclusive and complete in reporting about family structure and success by children. It may not serve some media outlets' agenda to note that poverty diminishes in black households, as it diminishes in white households, when a married couple is part of the family. The media do no one any favors by not writing about the leading cause of death for young black males, homicide, so that public attention can be drawn to the problem of violence in the black population. The media do no good if the 88.5 percent homicide rate for black-on-black murder is swept under a rug while legal enforcement killings of blacks produce blaring headlines. Media should not ignore the white person killed by police. For the thoughtful, this data would tamp down the rage and rioting.

If homicide by black males aged 1-19 is so prevalent both nationally and in Indiana, what measures would help ensure black lives to matter?

Stokely Carmichael, again, was skeptical of "white liberal policy"; blacks have to solve their problems on their own. Blacks can do this if and only if black leaders step up with the language of community and not "drink from the bitter cup of hatred."

It would be helpful to solve the problem of black despair and violence if celebrities were to speak fully aware of empirical research rather than being led by popular narratives and mistaken tropes. It would be helpful for black leaders to speak in conciliatory voices and with a message of hope.

Such voices and presence need to be amplified. Jim Brown, Syracuse All-American and a member of the NFL Hall of Fame, visits gangs in person and talks to them. The Miami Herald printed an article in 2010 about absent fathers. Brown said this:

"There is no such thing as society: There are individual men and women, and there are families." — Margaret Thatcher

"How in the world do gangbangers control a neighborhood? Twelve- and 13-year-olds, these babies with guns in their hands? They control a

community because there are no families there, no fathers there. The biggest problem in the black community is fathers that aren't taking care of their responsibilities. It is one of the biggest contributors to our disorganization and discord. It has turned everything backward. The social effect can't even be measured. It's totally devastating . . . Stop blaming the white man or the system or discrimination. Blame yourself."

People may dismiss Brown because he is of a certain age. How about the recently retired former Pacer Jalen Rose:

"A lot of people come from broken homes and don't perpetuate it. I don't want to give black men that crutch . . . I don't care if you were born in a cave or were a crack baby, there is no justification for this . . . there has to be a sense of reason and responsibility. This isn't just a money-and-power thing . . . Money gives guys access, but this isn't a professional-athlete problem. This is an African-American problem."

But the voice need not be that of a celebrity. There is hope when highly visible, non-academic black voices speak honestly and knowingly.

I can't sing the praises enough about Julia Jackson, the mother of Jacob Blake. Her son was shot by police in Kenosha but rather than encourage rage and violence of the sort that downtown Chicago and many other large cities witnessed, she counseled peace, saying that her son would be "very displeased" by the violence and destruction, which "doesn't reflect my son or my family." Following in the footsteps of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., she asked that Americans unite and "begin to pray for healing in our nation."

To which I can only add, "Amen." ♦

First Comes School, Then Comes Jobs, Then Comes . . .

Consider how young adults and society in general today perceive the time leading up to maturity. Specifically, at what age do we consider a youth to be a 'grown up'?

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Life expectancy increased by almost 10 years in the U.S. between 1960 and 2015. However, these bonus years are not all spent living the good life in retirement! Rather, some of these years are spent prior to when young adults enter the labor force, get married, and have children. The median age of first marriage in 2018 for males is almost 30 and 28 for women, but somewhat lower in Indiana. This is dramatically up from 22.8 and 20.3 respectively in 1960. The average age at which U.S. women become mothers is 26.4 up from 21 in 1972.

What's the hurry? Why should the elderly should reap all the fun of increased life expectancy? Well, it does become somewhat of a national issue when early retirement plus delayed assumption of adult responsibilities decreases the relative number of those contributing income and paying taxes to those who are not. More to the point, there is a limit to the extent to which society as a whole can assume responsibilities traditionally held by mature individuals and stable families.

Internationally, the total dependency ratio for a country is calculated as the ratio of combined youth population (ages 0-14) and elderly

population (ages 65+) per 100 people of working age (ages 15-64). A high total dependency ratio indicates that the working-age population and the overall economy face a greater burden to support and provide social services for youth and elderly persons. The U.S. is fortunate to have relatively good ratio of 53.9 dependents to 100 of those considered to be of working age, even if labor force participation has declined.

There is much to be said for deferring marriage and childrearing. The skills needed to follow through on personal commitments and earning sufficient income to maintain a separate household do not just happen. Americans are somewhat reluctant to discuss salaries and household finances in social situations. It is worthwhile, therefore, to consider how young adults and society in general perceive the time leading up to maturity.

At what age does the state consider a youth to have attained maturity? Definitely, youths receive a mixed message. They are free to join the military and vote in national elections at 18, but may not consume alcohol in public until 21. In Indiana, collaborative care extends foster care until a youth turns 21. At 21, those formerly in foster care can continue to participate in voluntary older youth services, such as rental assistance, until they are 26. Youths living on their own rue the fact that they must pay for health insurance, unlike peers who remain on parents' policies until they are 26. In addition, playing the odds on eventual student loan forgiveness contributes to postponing commitments.

Admittedly, many young adults, including those previously in foster care, do not merely wait around to age out of government or family care; they are actively engaged in building lives for themselves. Marriage, parenting, and conscious career development are not for everyone, but steps along any of these paths comes with adult responsibilities. How does society convey the importance of initiating such decisions?

In the past, most children in the U.S. attended formal classes in their respective faiths. On attaining the age of reason at seven, they learned

that lying, stealing, and disobedience to parents were unacceptable. Today, in some traditions, adolescence is publicly acknowledged along with expectations for making personal decisions. Regardless of religious practice, most would agree that society benefits from such rites of initiation into maturity.

At home in Fishers, Indiana, around high school graduation, garage doors open wide, grills are smoking, and signs on the front lawn announce the name, school, and year of the family's graduate. In the U.S., for both parents and graduates, the end of high school marks the end of one stage in life and a new beginning. This is not necessarily the case everywhere, although every country is uniquely challenged in dealing with late adolescents.

In Japan, a formal graduation and teacher appreciation ceremony follows the end of lower-secondary education, even though most students continue on to upper-secondary. In the United Kingdom, after completing a two-year General Certification of Secondary Education (GCSE) students do not so much "graduate" but "leave" or continue on prepare for three or four challenging A-Level exams required for entrance into higher education. As countries attain a certain level of affluence, young people, who have completed compulsory education around age 16, become entitled to two or three years of upper-secondary education.

Norway is just one of many countries making a distinction between lower- and upper-secondary (H. Farstad, in *International Encyclopedia of Education* (Third Edition), 2010). Entrants to upper-secondary can choose between three university prep programs and nine alternate programs. The nine alternate programs include building and construction, design and crafts, electricity and electronics, health and social care, media and communication, utilization of natural resources, restaurant and food processing, service

and transport, plus technical and industrial production.

In general, Norwegian upper-secondary vocational training includes 2 years of school-based education followed by 2 years of formalized apprenticeship training. Employers' organizations, unions, individual companies, and public institutions collaborate with schools in administering apprenticeships within a formal framework.

Two aspects of the Norwegian system are particularly interesting. There is a follow-up service for dropouts and young persons of upper-secondary age who are not participating in any of these programs. An attempt is made to assist these youths in finding appropriate education and work experiences or to establish a tailor-made combination. An additional feature of Norway's upper-secondary is that those who successfully complete vocational training are eligible for a

bridging course to meet entrance requirements for high education.

The Norwegian approach addresses two valid objections to tracking youngsters at an early age

into vocational versus university-prep lie at the core of American thought. First, it is strongly held that late bloomers should receive the educational background necessary for bridging back onto a path leading to the highest levels of academic achievement. Second, vocational training is often perceived as a second-rate education for low-income students. U.S. government and school policies are unlikely to change attitudes. Therefore, any impetus for choosing a specific career path in the final years of high school in the United States must come from parents and students, and every parent and child is unique. Nonetheless, it is informative to see how individual states are nudging adolescents onto specific career paths.

In Idaho, when students reach seventh grade the state offers them \$4,125 to customize their high-school education. The "Advanced

In Idaho, when students reach seventh grade the state offers them \$4,125 to customize their high-school education.

Opportunities” program gives students purchasing power to shape their careers, but not without a great deal of bureaucratic paperwork. In response to the criticism that this costly program primarily benefitted college-bound students, the Legislature expanded the program to provide funding for apprenticeships and workforce development courses. The overall goal is that high school students opt into a college track or train to acquire a specialized market skill (Max Eden, “An Educational Innovation That Beats Learning Pods,” *Wall Street Journal*, Sept. 5-6, 2020, A11).

It is not always pleasant to move from facilitating potential to requiring commitment; a supportive social consensus is necessary. What is

best for young adults is to limit any nurturing that fosters dependency, undermines a youth’s hidden strengths, and implies that the nurturer is indispensable.

It is painful for a 12-year-old Hoosier boy to accept that it is unlikely that he will play football at Notre Dame followed by a lucrative Colts contract. However, as boys and girls mature, they discard youthful fantasies and open themselves to freely selecting the best career and family commitments suitable to their unique inclinations and talents. By pointing out the way and nudging them along the path, we all become the eventual recipients of their enormous potential. ♦

The Lost History of Western Civilization

Surely every age is prone to the disorders that rack multiculturalism and identity politics: illogic, misplaced religious fervor, irrational and unbridled passions. Yet to read “The Lost History of Western Civilization” by Stanley Kurtz is to wonder: What was it about the post-1960s human host that proved so congenial to these afflictions?

One of Allan Bloom’s answers in “The Closing of the American Mind,” with which Kurtz agrees, was simple: broken homes. After the 1960s, the children weren’t all right after all. The radically atomized families from which many students sprang seemed to have deprived them of a self-protective response to relativism. This insight was stunning when Bloom delivered it — and remains stunning today as a new generation of the domestically deprived, searching desperately for their selves, are drawn by default into the politics of identity.

Even so, 33 years after the emblematic fight, one suspects that there may also be other, more prosaic reasons that made jettisoning the Western canon appealing. Maybe, faced with the Great Books, some people just wanted a lazier way out. After all, it is easier to write about “gendering” in *Don Quixote* than it is to read Cervantes in the original. It is simpler — and these days, safer — for teachers to play along with victimology than it is to hold their students to high intellectual standards through tough grading and tough books. Maybe multiculturalism’s rule is, in part, a tacit collusion according to which both teachers and students would make it easier on themselves in the classroom—a deal for which the teachers deserve the lion’s share of blame. — *Mary Eberstadt in the summer 2020 issue of the Claremont Review of Books*

An Anti-Racist Manifesto

On Race, Police, Fake News and Some Inconvenient Truths

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The racial violence issue in the U.S. just won't go away. But ever since the George Floyd episode a troubling corollary adheres, even though not yet widely recognized.

The public information environment has been corrupted by those who politicize tragedies such as Mr. Floyd, Jacob Blake and Breonna Taylor, a tactic that has the perverse effect of diminishing the traditional civil rights cause. Here, the proximate issue and also the larger societal reality are eclipsed as race hustlers have been aggressing hyperbolically and relentlessly regardless of the opaque full truth. The worst side-effect is that propagandized minorities who feel victimized then resort to more violence as antidote.

Purveyors of the fraud, prominently including the mainstream news media, are literally inciting mass violence via false narrative. Another fake news hoax this is, but with mortal consequences. We have blood in the streets because of a monumental misunderstanding as the United States suffers through a Jacobin craze. (Unfortunately, some major university leaders within in Indiana have abetted the toxic Big Lie clique when they should have been doing more critical thinking.) Mired in this roiling irrationality, America may benefit from one further word on the subject from a different perspective.

What of the broader race relations issue? It took zero lag time after the Floyd incident for opportunists of the racial victimhood industry to accuse our country of engendering a climate of racist danger for black citizens. This qualifies as not only substantively wrong but anti-American slander of the first magnitude because the facts are to the contrary — whether anyone still cares to know them or not.

By now, you may have heard the real numbers — unless you watch CNN exclusively. Compared with ten million arrests, roughly 1,000 fatal police shootings occurred in the U.S. in 2019, about 40 of unarmed perps. (In Joe Biden's lexicon, some of the unarmed may be "coming at them with a knife.") All or mostly black victims? No, 20 white, 10 black, 10 other, among the 40 unarmed, with nearly all occurrences found to be justified. Among the 1,000 total fatalities, most were white. And did you know that black cops are more likely to pull the trigger on a black perp or suspect than white cops are?

Also, about 100 cops are killed in the line of duty in a typical year. Which demographic category commits the most crime in this country? Young black males, I am afraid, happens to be the ineffable answer. (Data come from the National Violent Death Reporting System: CDC 2020; also Morgan and Oudekerk 2019; U.S. Department of Justice, "Criminal Victimization, 2018.")

But the total shooting-by-police numbers have been declining over the past four years. So, why weren't rioters in the streets over this issue during the Obama presidency? You know the answer. The Democrats and pro-Democrat media were not inciting, or sending, their storm troopers into the streets for political effect back then. Those millennials vandalizing statuary, looting stores, and throwing bricks at cops certainly are not Young Republican or Federalist Society members.

More food for thought: In view of the megamillions of public encounters by police each year, largely with an unsavory segment of society, the U.S. may already be at or near the minimum realistic residual level of police brutality that a vast, diverse, complex nation could hope for.

Support for this grounded hypothesis is found in international police violence statistics.

Still, is there not an established tendency for blacks to be victims of interracial violence in the United States? Hasn't that been the recent media message? Message, yes; truth, no. Here are the suppressed and inconvenient facts:

About 90 percent of interracial violent crime in our nation is committed by blacks against whites. Really. That is not a misprint.

The black-on-white murder rate in the U.S. exceeds the white-on-black rate by about 2½ to one.

The black-on-white assault and battery rate exceeds the corresponding white-on-black rate in this country by at least ten to one.

I would rather not report what is known about U.S. interracial rape statistics because it could be taken as incendiary, but the previous numbers in terms of black-white proclivity are dwarfed. (See Department of Justice, Criminal Victimization in the United States, "Victims and Offenders"—if not scrubbed from the Web; Morgan and Oudekerk 2019.) Liberal, politically correct, intersectionalist feminists need to reflect on that one.

If these interracial crime ratios were randomly based, they would be uniform, i.e., one to one, for the two racial groups. In other words, the population with six times as many potential victims also has six times the pool of perpetrators, so the effects of that disproportion should be perfectly offsetting arithmetically. QED. Sure, the relative crime stats would be moderated if adjusted for socioeconomic status (from astronomical to merely stratospheric), but by no means inverted. The baseline conclusion is straightforward, even if surprising to readers who are victims themselves — victims of racial and racist propaganda. The hysterical public mantra of epidemic white-on-black violence is thus exposed as fraud.

One must ask why more observers have not noticed all this. Instead, we see the race mongers rushing to judgment and forming their own rabid mob, literally, to impose vigilante vengeance upon our country. Ironical? Worse than that: By applying

a false, adverse racial stereotype to the nation, this phalanx of demagogues has committed an objective act of mass racism, revealing themselves to be as bigoted as anyone. Care to guess why they did not react the same way to the O. J. Simpson acquittal?

An old expression says, "You can't reason with liberals — because they 'think' emotionally, not rationally." The Floyd incident dramatized this reputed tendency at its zenith, to wit: "One cop in one city kills a man. Therefore, America is racist and all police throughout the country must be eliminated." Further comment is hardly necessary, but a bonus point can punctuate:

One heroic assumption pervades the George Floyd fallout, but under the radar. Why must everyone assume that the Minneapolis cop who snuffed the life out of Mr. Floyd had a racist motive — out of an infinite number of possible motives? Those who do make that assumption forfeit the debate by default. We hear that the cop and victim may have had a history of knowing each other. Again, the nation is coming apart over a lie-based misunderstanding, conspicuously augmented by poor logic.

Finally, to those who complain that less value is attached to black lives in this country, as the racial demagoguery has alleged, please ponder the national outcry over one fatality in the Floyd incident. In fact, the entire country is united in outrage for once. Compare that fervid reaction with the total lack of attention given the multitude of white citizens murdered by blacks year after year. So, which lives don't seem to matter as much? Let us get real.

Interim Summary

My main purpose, if not already obvious, is to expose an instance of 1984 doublespeak wrapped into contemporary gaslighting: Many in our country are agitated because of a propaganda-induced misperception about white-on-black and cop-on-black violence. I hope this revelation of the real record provides them relief. Perhaps more universal awareness of the contrary facts I report will contribute to national healing and mitigate

reciprocal violence. Yes, isn't it great news that the prevailing condition in the U.S. is epidemic black-on-white racial violence? Not exactly, but recognition of the truth can at least serve as a starting point for further understanding, renewal, and harmony.

* * *

Four Broader Corollaries

1. Let the record show that for the past 45 years or so, the only legally sanctioned, even legally mandated, racial discrimination in the United States has been in favor of blacks (and some other minorities), against whites. Codified as so-called affirmative action, this is the first time in world history that an ethnic majority group intentionally disadvantaged itself to benefit another tribe, purely out of a sense of justice (sometimes derided as "liberal guilt"). In effect, reparations have already been paid through this enduring, generations-spanning reverse discrimination. The beneficiaries then express their gratitude for the macro-magnanimity by not only defaming the group responsible but chronic mass violence, frankly, while projecting the opposite. No altruistic deed goes unpunished—and no one alive today had anything to do with slavery or even Jim Crow laws, but everyone alive today had ancestors who were slaves. If you have never thought of it this way, sorry to have to break the news.

From some of history's other revolutionary episodes and how they descended into horrendous excesses, it should have been foreseen that the civil rights movement's passion to eradicate anti-black racism could ultimately transmogrify into anti-white racism. That is where the U.S. and some other nations are now, evidently, as underscored by the extremes played out in recent times. (For example, how often have you heard the demonizing but unconsciously self-contradictory accusation, "All whites are racist"? Simultaneously and suddenly arises the reverse-racist campaign against "whiteness.") Two wrongs do not make a right, to coin a phrase, and if you do not believe that racism is categorically wrong regardless of the demographic identity of the

target, you share that view with Hitler and his Nazis. On very rare occasions, the otherwise taboo Third Reich comparison is warranted — and we are experiencing a very rare occasion. The violent, radical Antifa and BLM groups, and maybe even the Democrat National Committee, wear the designated comparison audaciously.

* * *

2. If there is one subject that is a sure conversation stopper in today's America, it is race. Following decades of interracial upheaval, the issue of race remains delicate, charged, thermo-nuclear, an untouchable third rail and a red-hot potato in so many polite circles. Racial political correctness, it could be called. People walk (and talk) on egg shells, in effect, when it comes to race, out of fear of saying the wrong thing and being falsely labeled a racist. Being called a racist nowadays is the ugliest scarlet letter one can have attached, perhaps even worse than being called a murderer, so the sensitivity is understandable.

This racial p.c. counter-trend phenomenon, however, actually may be a backhanded signal of how non-racist and anti-racist the nation's majority culture has become, occasional contrary cases notwithstanding and in contrast to our more primitive distant past. Anti-minority racism, in particular, has become totally unfashionable, passé, and socially unacceptable — openly practiced only by numerically insignificant fringe elements such as self-proclaimed white supremacists, and an even smaller number of retrograde police officers — so there is considerable good news on this front. By world and historical norms, the United States is not a very racist country (Pew 2019b). Some polling evidence even reveals that black Americans perceive more black anti-white bigotry than the converse (Rasmussen 2013; cf. Pew 2019a). And any reader now provoked by the immediately preceding material is confirming and illustrating the point about race's power to incite.

Can we really posit minimal institutional and systemic racism in the U.S. today? Actually, not quite; there remain two dominant forms of it. One, however, as mentioned, is the pro-minority

reverse discrimination qua “affirmative action” explicitly designed to damage a different race, the majority race, but for benevolent if misguided reasons. This policy is invidious racial discrimination straight-up and has always been as inherently immoral as the anti-minority kind, per the standards of deontological ethics, because of reliance on unjust means.

Offsetting any putative benefit such as patronizing, debilitating, preferential treatment via lower standards might deliver for minorities, which is questionable, is the profile of government policies designed to crush the underclass. These would be the liberal “progressive” policies that in fact: 1) 75 percent of black children born into broken homes; 2) deficient public schools leading to a high minority dropout rate; and 3) a slack morality and justice system yielding widespread addictive substance abuse among minorities. Up against this three-headed albatross, no wonder aggregate black socio-economic achievement lags so badly.

Why “designed to crush”? Not a bald presumption but a conclusion, it derives from this rhetorical punch line: What would happen to U.S. Democrats if the entire black underclass suddenly became millionaires? They would never win another election, that’s what — and Democrat pols recognize it. This is why we should suspect that the Democrat Party intentionally sabotages black opportunity. Democrats need a perpetually dependent underclass of disaffected but loyal voters. (This base political motive also may account for the Democrat infatuation with recruiting more illegal aliens into the country.)

Somewhat surreptitiously and at variance with their cultivated public image, the Democrats have always been the party of racism, i.e., slavery, the Confederacy, Jim Crow segregation, Woodrow Wilson, eugenics, Bull Connor, and the Ku Klux Klan. More contemporary examples include (1) tepid congressional support for the 1964 Civil Rights Act compared to Republicans, (2) a very recent Senate Majority Leader named Robert Byrd who actually was a KKK Grand Cyclops (or whatever they call it), and (3) the resurgence of anti-Semitism among liberal Democrats. So, why

expect the Dems to be less cynical about race now? After all, from the preceding tutorial, a number of supposed “facts” on race are found to be illusory. It may even be no coincidence that virtually all Democrat-run major U.S. cities leave black neighborhoods in shambles.

* * *

3. Apart from any lingering systemic or structural racism, what about the more personal level, or presumed micro-aggressions such as police stopping motorists for “driving while black” — which surely is far more than micro-annoying for the victims? That phenomenon actually should be considered more empiricism than racism, though — the same as the Rev. Jesse Jackson’s acknowledgment that he, like many whites, will cross the street rather than pass near a group of young black males on the sidewalk. This empirical tendency, along with similar ones, will continue as part of human nature (i.e., the self-preservation instinct) as long as young black males are known to be the most crime-prone demographic in America. It may not be an elevated or attractive tendency, but let us not tag normal human nature with the “racist” slur. (Generalizing from such an established pattern is obviously much different and more legitimate than stereotyping from a single instance, as commonly done in the George Floyd case.)

* * *

4. Former Attorney General Eric Holder once demanded that Americans have the courage to address the subject of race. I’m an American and the issue here, regrettably, is race. Is this enough courage for you, General? I trust you appreciate my commentary. By relying on objective evidence, the content embodies the true anti-racist spirit of fundamental indifference to race — the way it should be à la the M. L. King ideal. In fact, it grows tedious to even have to use the words “white,” “black” and “race” so often, but such are the wages of today’s pandemic racial confusion.

This essay’s heterodox perspective is offered to help balance the orchestrated disinformation — a balance that is badly needed but in short supply presently. ♦

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Ten Leading Causes of Death by Age Group, U.S., 2018

Rank	<1	1-4	5-9	10-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Total
1	Congenital Anomalies 4,473	Unintentional Injury 1,226	Unintentional Injury 734	Unintentional Injury 692	Unintentional Injury 12,044	Unintentional Injury 24,614	Unintentional Injury 22,667	Malignant Neoplasms 37,301	Malignant Neoplasms 113,947	Heart Disease 526,509	Heart Disease 655,381
2	Short Gestation 3,679	Congenital Anomalies 384	Malignant Neoplasms 393	Suicide 596	Suicide 6,211	Suicide 8,020	Malignant Neoplasms 10,640	Heart Disease 32,220	Heart Disease 81,042	Malignant Neoplasms 431,102	Malignant Neoplasms 599,274
3	Maternal Pregnancy Comp. 1,358	Homicide 353	Congenital Anomalies 201	Malignant Neoplasms 450	Homicide 4,607	Homicide 5,234	Heart Disease 10,532	Unintentional Injury 23,056	Unintentional Injury 23,693	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 135,560	Unintentional Injury 167,127
4	SIDS 1,334	Malignant Neoplasms 326	Homicide 121	Congenital Anomalies 172	Malignant Neoplasms 1,371	Malignant Neoplasms 3,684	Suicide 7,521	Suicide 8,345	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 18,804	Cerebro-vascular Disease 127,244	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 159,486
5	Unintentional Injury 1,168	Influenza & Pneumonia 122	Influenza & Pneumonia 71	Homicide 168	Heart Disease 905	Heart Disease 3,561	Homicide 3,304	Liver Disease 8,157	Diabetes Mellitus 14,941	Alzheimer's Disease 120,658	Cerebro-vascular Disease 147,810
6	Placenta Cord. Membranes 724	Heart Disease 115	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 68	Heart Disease 101	Congenital Anomalies 354	Liver Disease 1,008	Liver Disease 3,108	Diabetes Mellitus 6,414	Liver Disease 13,945	Diabetes Mellitus 60,182	Alzheimer's Disease 122,019
7	Bacterial Sepsis 579	Perinatal Period 62	Heart Disease 68	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 64	Diabetes Mellitus 246	Diabetes Mellitus 837	Diabetes Mellitus 2,282	Cerebro-vascular Disease 5,128	Cerebro-vascular Disease 12,789	Unintentional Injury 57,213	Diabetes Mellitus 84,946
8	Circulatory System Disease 428	Septicemia 54	Cerebro-vascular Disease 34	Cerebro-vascular Disease 54	Influenza & Pneumonia 200	Cerebro-vascular Disease 567	Cerebro-vascular Disease 1,704	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 3,807	Suicide 8,540	Influenza & Pneumonia 48,888	Influenza & Pneumonia 59,120
9	Respiratory Distress 390	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 50	Septicemia 34	Influenza & Pneumonia 51	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 165	HIV 482	Influenza & Pneumonia 956	Septicemia 2,380	Septicemia 5,956	Nephritis 42,232	Nephritis 51,386
10	Neonatal Hemorrhage 375	Cerebro-vascular Disease 43	Benign Neoplasms 19	Benign Neoplasms 30	Complicated Pregnancy 151	Influenza & Pneumonia 457	Septicemia 829	Influenza & Pneumonia 2,339	Influenza & Pneumonia 5,858	Parkinson's Disease 32,988	Suicide 48,344

Data Source: National Vital Statistics System, National Center for Health Statistics, CDC.
Produced by: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, CDC using WISQARS™.



Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention
National Center for Injury
Prevention and Control



Election Talking Points for Conservative Teens

With Election Day approaching, political conversations are heating up in high school classrooms and on college campuses. Conservative students may feel uncomfortable sharing their views, fearing repercussions from liberal instructors, especially if they support the re-election of Donald Trump. A recent Cato Institute survey found that 77 percent of Republicans feel less free to say what they think; nearly half of Republican college students report hearing professors go on anti-Trump rants in class, according to a poll by The College Fix. Whether or not you're old enough to vote, it's important to know the facts about how presidential elections work and why it's OK to support the candidate of your choice. Here are fact-based talking points to counter your antagonists:

Private Property

"Social justice is more important than protecting rich people's stuff."

In the most important ways, the right of private property is the original social justice. Property is the foundation of every right we have, including the right to be free. It works like an economic Golden Rule: If your property is respected, is owned, you can see the wisdom in respecting a neighbor's property.

It was the genius of the old common law, grounded in reason and custom, that property, broadly conceived, separates one individual from another; and individuals are independent or free to the extent that they have sole or exclusive dominion over what they hold. The fundamental reason that Americans work so hard every day, are so productive, is to acquire property so they can remain independent and free.

Sources: <https://www.cato.org/cato-handbook-policy-makers/cato-handbook-policy-makers-8th-edition-2017/property-rights-constitution>; <https://www.amazon.com/Noblest-Triumph-Property-Prosperity-Through/dp/0312223374>

Foreign Influence

"Foreign influence could rig the election in favor of Donald Trump."

Americans have feared foreign interference in elections since the Constitution was drafted in 1787. John Adams wrote, “As often as Elections happen the danger of foreign Influence recurs.” But Adams and his colleagues could not have imagined the technological tools at the disposal of today’s foreign adversaries. U.S. intelligence officials acknowledge that information warfare is being waged from abroad, with China seemingly preferring Joe Biden over Trump and Russia favoring a Trump victory.

To date the influence campaign has involved social media manipulation. While there is concern over a potential cyberattack threatening voter rolls and ballot security, most officials believe it would be extremely difficult to alter votes cast in a presidential election because the states use so many different voting systems and processes.

Sources: <https://www.npr.org/2019/09/01/737978684/what-you-need-to-know-about-foreign-interference-and-the-2020-election>; <https://www.cnn.com/2020/08/07/politics/2020-election-russia-china-iran/index.html>

The Electoral College

“Hillary Clinton won the popular vote in 2016 so she should be president.”

The system we use for electing a president is called the Electoral College, and it is not based on popular vote. Here’s how it works: When voters go to the polls, they cast their ballot for a slate of electors — this year Trump electors or Biden electors. The number of electors in each state is the sum of its U.S. senators and representatives. Under Article II, Section 1 of the Constitution, state legislatures decide how electors are chosen and distributed. In 48 of 50 states, the candidate who wins the most votes receives all of the state’s electoral votes.

Maine and Nebraska allocate them by congressional district. States prefer the winner-take-all approach because it gives the voting majority in that state more influence in the Electoral College. A candidate must win a majority of the Electoral College (270 out of 538) to become president.

Source: <https://www.270towin.com/>; <https://www.americanheritage.com/electoral-college-how-it-got-way-and-why-were-stuck-it>.

“The Electoral College is anti-democratic.”

The Framers designed an institution for selecting the president that was republican in nature, not democratic. They debated popular election of the president but concluded that the public could not cast an informed vote. They considered having Congress make the choice but worried that the executive would be beholden to the legislative branch. The Electoral College was a compromise. The idea was to bring together a group of political leaders who would choose the president from the best possible candidates of the day. Alexander Hamilton wrote in *Federalist* 68 that the system should reflect “the sense of the people,” but that “the immediate election should be made by men most capable of analyzing the qualities” needed in a chief executive. He added, “A small number of persons, selected by their fellow-citizens from the general mass, will be most likely to possess the information and discernment requisite to such complicated investigations.” Although the Electoral College no longer operates as it did originally, it remains a uniquely American and representative institution.

Sources: <https://www.factcheck.org/2008/02/the-reason-for-the-electoral-college/>; https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed68.asp

“With 24/7 news coverage, the people can be trusted to make an informed vote.”

There are other reasons to preserve the Electoral College. It balances voting power across states so no one region of the country is dominant. If the president were elected by popular vote, a candidate could focus all attention on the east and west coasts and ignore the middle of the country. “Without the Electoral College, a relatively small number of states — in an extreme case, as few as seven — could elect a president and control the executive branch of the national government. How confident should we be that these few large states would act in the national interest, as opposed to focusing

almost exclusively on their narrow state interests? However, with the Electoral College, even if one presidential candidate was able to win the Electoral College votes of the people of the seven largest states — a majority of the U.S. population — he or she still would need an additional 61 Electoral College votes to win. A presidential campaign that focuses exclusively on the largest states will lose.”

Source: <https://thefederalist.com/2016/09/16/the-electoral-college-still-makes-sense-because-were-not-a-democracy/>

Source quote: <https://thehill.com/opinion/campaign/498512-the-electoral-college-is-not-democratic-nor-should-it-be>

“Shouldn’t elections be based on one-person, one-vote?”

The U.S. House of Representatives is based on a state’s population and the concept of one-person, one-vote. The U.S. Senate, however, is based on equal representation. That’s why Indiana, with 6.7 million residents, has the same number of senators as California, with 39 million people. The Electoral College is similar. Both are considered an important part of our federal system, in which power is shared between state and national governments.

Source: <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/defense-electoral-college>

“The Electoral College is racist.”

The Electoral College led to slavery’s destruction. In 1860, Republican Abraham Lincoln won the Electoral College by a wide margin but lost the popular vote. Had the Democrats won the election that year, the emancipation of enslaved people would have happened much later in U.S. history. At the Constitutional Convention, the debate over how to select the chief executive did not focus on slavery but on balancing the rights of different states: large and small, North and South. Jennifer Braceras, director of Independent Women’s Law Center and a former member of the United States Commission on Civil Rights, notes that, “Far from being racist, the Electoral College protects the interests of anyone in the minority —

political, geographic, racial, or otherwise. By contrast, a nationwide popular vote would be, as Ben Franklin purportedly said about democracy, ‘like two wolves and a lamb voting on what’s for lunch.’ Anyone who wants to protect the lamb should favor keeping the Electoral College.

Source: <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/09/01/opinion/is-electoral-college-racist/>

Ballot Access and Integrity

“There are still obstacles to voting in this country.”

Thanks to our long history of expanding the right to vote, we have universal suffrage in this country, which means all citizens over 18 are eligible. The exception is convicted felons who, in most states, lose their right to vote during their prison sentence.

“Republicans want to suppress Democratic votes by discouraging mail-in voting.”

“It’s true that Democrats tend to favor mail-in voting and Republicans tend to oppose it, but that is mostly due to concerns over voter fraud. A study by a Stanford University professor found that voting by mail yielded a small but roughly equal increase in turnout between the parties.

Source: <https://www.npr.org/2020/06/12/873878423/voting-and-elections-divide-republicans-and-democrats-like-little-else-heres-why>

“Voter fraud is a myth.”

Voter fraud is real. A Heritage Foundation voter fraud database contains 1,217 documented cases of fraud, and they believe that is just the “tip of the iceberg.” These range from ineligible non-citizens casting illegal ballots to politicians buying votes and rigging their own elections. There have been dozens of such cases in Indiana. In one, Lowell “Ross” Colen, a 10-year veteran of the Rising Sun Police Department, was forced to resign after pleading guilty to four counts of felony voter fraud. Colen was charged with illegally trying to help his father win election to the Rising Sun City Council by completing absentee voter applications and filling

out ballots for people who were not eligible to vote in the county and in some cases forging signatures. The Heritage Foundation has found that “voter fraud is not particular to one party or ideology. At its core, people cheat in elections to further their preferred causes or to advance their own careers, and there’s nothing inherently conservative or liberal about the desire to win.”

Sources: <https://www.heritage.org/election-integrity/commentary/more-proof-voter-fraud-real-and-bipartisan>; https://www.heritage.org/voterfraud/search?combine=&state=IN&year=&case_type=All&fraud_type=All&page=2

“Voter ID laws are designed to suppress Democratic votes.”

Voter ID is a reasonable requirement that protects the integrity of the ballot. Identification laws have been in place in Georgia and Indiana for many years, and there has been no drop in turnout of minority, poor, or elderly voters. U.S. citizens of all socio-economic categories need photo ID as part of their daily lives – whether to drive a car, buy a beer or board a plane. Most states offer free IDs to people who cannot afford them.

Source: <https://www.usnews.com/debate-club/should-photo-id-be-required-to-vote/voter-id-laws-protect-the-integrity-of-our-democracy>

Mail-in Balloting

“Voting by mail is safer because of the coronavirus.”

Absentee voting is allowed in most states for citizens who are traveling on Election Day or physically unable to go to the polls. But there are reasons to worry about mass voting by mail. Critics say it makes it easier to commit fraud, intimidate voters and destroy the confidentiality of ballot. Also, it puts elections into the hands of the Postal Service, which has not proven to be competent. Critics have been calling for its reform or elimination since the early 1980s. Without the oversight of election and polling officials, ballots can be lost, disqualified or stolen.

Sources: <https://www.heritage.org/election-integrity/commentary/database-swells-1285-proven-cases-voter-fraud-america>; <https://www.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/pao47.pdf>

Value of Voting

“Why vote anyway? One vote doesn’t matter.”

Actually, a single vote can make a difference. There have been more than a dozen races decided by a single vote or ending in a tie over the last 20 years. In 2017, a Virginia House of Delegates race ended in a tie out of more than 23,000 votes cast. Local officials broke the tie by pulling a name out of a bowl. As a result, Republican David Yancey was declared the winner and his party took control of the state House by a single seat.

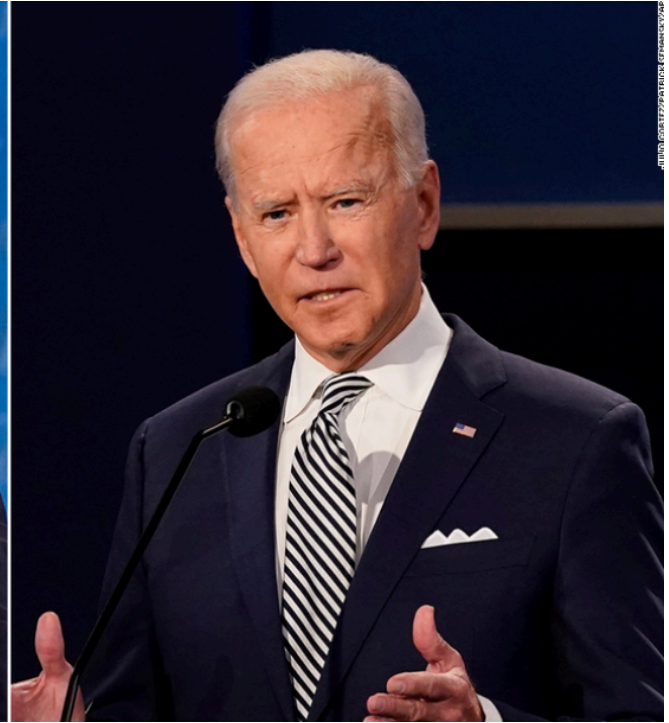
Source: <https://www.npr.org/2018/11/03/663709392/why-every-vote-matters-the-elections-decided-by-a-single-vote-or-a-little-more>

Trump versus Biden

“If you support Donald Trump you must be a racist.”

I support Donald Trump because I agree with his economic and trade policies. I support Donald Trump because I agree with his views and policies on international relations. I support him because of his promise to nominate conservative judges. I support him because his policies have benefited black Americans more than the Democratic policies of the previous administration. Black author and political commentator Giannino Caldwell noted of Trump, “His recent police-reform executive order, the First Step Act, released thousands of people from jail (90 percent of whom were black). He has promoted ‘opportunity zones’ that incentivized private investment into marginalized communities, and also increased federal funding to historically black colleges and universities by 17 percent — a total exceeding \$100 million.

Source: <https://nypost.com/2020/07/04/trump-not-biden-has-helped-make-black-lives-better/>



Special Report

Trump's Only Chance to Win

by **John F. Gaski, Ph.D.**

(Sept. 10) — A common impression has it that Donald Trump's political handlers wage a non-stop battle to save the inept re-election candidate from himself. In view of the weak messaging performance of the Trump campaign's professional marketers, it becomes plausible that the primary fault may not lie with Mr. Trump. What weakness? Following is a prescriptive selection of absolute knockout punches the flat-footed Trump campaign could be launching but, curiously, does not use. Readers can judge the prudence of that restraint in the face of no-holds-barred Democrat total warfare. Enjoy, and maybe the Trump people will notice and recall that the heart and soul of political marketing is the message—because the product, i.e., candidate, is the embodiment of the message.

The valenced issue of fairness still resonates with most Americans, so keep reminding the electorate of the two-tiered (in)justice system that

puts Democrats such as the Clintons and Joe Biden above the law. Remind how the Democrats treated Justice Kavanaugh and anyone else who ever got in their way such as Clarence Thomas, Michael Flynn, and Donald Trump himself. Keep using the effective ideal expressed as "This should never happen to another president," meaning variously the Russia hoax, the Ukraine fake impeachment, or the overall sedition and coup attempt. (It is past time to start using the accurate word "sedition.") A good adjunct for Mr. Trump is "If they can do it to me, they can do worse to you." Yes, voters need to realize that the Dems are dangerous to them personally, and public fairness may be an underrated issue.

A corollary is how the Democrats vulgarize the political climate with their vicious tactics. Say it this way: "Do not reward the Dems for their repugnant behavior. If you do, politics in America will just get uglier and dirtier."

Speaking of, do not neglect to emphasize that most political violence in this country is committed by Democrats — to the extent that party affiliation is identifiable — contrary to the fake propaganda the public has received. Antifa is literally the brown-shirt arm of the DNC. That

would be the same DNC that funded the Occupy Wall Street slow-motion riot. It is not Republican kids who shout down and attack campus speakers they don't like, or now riot in the streets.

Corollary II: To endure the relentless political assault, Donald Trump appears to be the toughest president we've had in a long time. In this world, that is a national asset which should be valued and stressed to voters.

Again on extreme violence, the Democrat advantage on the abortion issue can be reversed — with the right rhetorical agility that Republicans never master. Despite intense national controversy, the Trump campaign can focus on aspects that a majority do agree upon, such as the brutality of late-term and partial-birth abortion, and especially the grisly immorality of literal post-delivery infanticide that Democrats now support.

Another issue the Republicans should own is healthcare, on which Democrat propaganda has been punching above its weight, especially in view of its inherent liabilities. Why can't the truth win out over Democrat lies? An example of those lies Repubs and Trump should exploit more: "If you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor. If you like your plan, you can keep your plan." Reminding the voters of this one should be effective in establishing credibility because people already know it was a lie.

Related undeserved Democrat strengths on which Repubs-Trump should win are Medicare and Social Security. Again, what is the truth? Democrats have been running the two programs into insolvency for decades and whenever Republicans produce a viable plan to save one or the other, the Dems thwart it. Why? Because they would rather prolong the problem as a wedge issue than solve the problem. So, to verify and exploit, Repubs just need to replay some old news footage — over and over to break through the Dem brainwashing of the masses. And don't forget to explain how Democrats intend to take private health insurance away from 180 million Americans. The electorate needs to know that the "Medicare for all" ruse is not like Medicare. The college debt crisis is similar. Haven't Trump's

people noticed that this was not a crisis until a Democrat administration ("O'Biden," as Joe says) took over student lending and made it so? Intentionally, that is, just to create another government-dependent class. Candidate Trump should hammer that point for a home run.

Are we tired of winning yet? If not, let's have Trump jiu-jitsu the Dems again by owning the race issue, as he should. How so? After recounting his stunning success in curing minority unemployment, proffer this rhetorical question to the national black audience: "What would happen to the Democrats if the entire black underclass suddenly became rich? The Dems would never win another election — and they know it. Now do you see why the Dems have had a political interest in keeping the underclass poor? It is Republicans who have a natural interest in helping the poor get rich." It also is no coincidence that black neighborhoods are in shambles in virtually every Democrat-run American city. That visual should be a staple of the campaign.

Another way to connect with black Americans is via the common religious orientation. This natural affinity between blacks and most Republicans has been underutilized politically.

And the Dems overuse the "racism" accusation so much that the term is losing its potency. (This is why they brought out the "white supremacy" trope recently.) In so doing, they neuter the real offense and insult the intelligence of minorities. Now, wouldn't you like to hear Trump, or any Republican, employ such poignancy to puncture the cynicism? And while they are at it, please point out that the Dems are the party of slavery, the Confederacy, Jim Crow, Bull Connor, and the KKK — having had a KKK Grand Kleagle (or whatever the title) as their Senate Majority Leader only a few years ago. (On race-related issues, Leo Terrell, Larry Elder, Candace Owens, and maybe Herschel Walker should be invited to do the TV ads.)

But how can Trump run on an economy with depression-level metrics? Easy; he should still own that issue, too. Aside from reminding voters

of creating the greatest economy in world history, pose this rhetorical question whenever Democrats blame the Covid economy on the President: Is our country the only one afflicted with Coronavirus or does the pandemic afflict the whole world? Therefore, Trump deserves credit for our economic success, but not the blame for the virus-induced slowdown.

To Trump's marketers again: Don't ever refer to the Obama-Biden economy as a "weak recovery," as is the naïve, feckless custom. Do not give them even that much credit. For the right locution, say "long-term economic stagnation is what Biden-Obama gave us." We can count on Biden to tout the Obama administration's record of eight years of (anemic) economic growth, yet none of Trump's political marketers have any idea how to rebut the claim. Along with the preceding, here's how simple it would be: Growth is the normal state of our economy. On average, the U.S. tends to have about ten straight years of economic growth between short recessions lasting a few months, so the "O'Biden" record isn't saying much. In fact, the 2008-09 recession ended before the last G. W. Bush fiscal year closed out, so "O'Biden-'Bama" deserve no credit for fixing it, as they falsely try to claim. (Do you think the amateurish Trump messaging team knows any of this?)

Of course, true to their "Big Lie" or gaslight playbook, the Dems do accuse Donald Trump of poor performance in battling the Covid plague. Next time they call Trump slow in responding to the health emergency during last February, Trump can simply reply with the truth — but more effectively than rhetorically ham-handed Repubs usually do. "February?" Trump should say. "I didn't wait until February. I started in January with the China travel ban — while Dems/Biden were opposed to it and doing nothing themselves (except impeachment and calling the ban racist). And I did something very important every day in February: I maintained and enforced the China travel ban! February was also the period when our heroic Operation Warp Speed was developed. Only the Democrats would politicize a pandemic."

Truth normally is on the Republican side. In brief, the true story line here is that Trump directed the and after Russia contributed millions to the Clintons' personal (foundation) slush fund in return for American uranium rights. Years earlier, as a few will recall, Bill Clinton also gave away military/nuclear technology to China in return for campaign cash — then had his Justice Department operative, Jamie Gorelick, conveniently erect the legal wall between the FBI and CIA investigations so the two sides of the transaction could not be connected. Remember that wall of separation? Same one that prevented U.S. intel from connecting the dots before 9-11! Astute grown-ups already know that Bill Clinton has more culpability for 9-11 than anyone other than Osama bin Laden or Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. (And I realize this public review may result in the Fort Marcy Park treatment for me.) Advice to Trump: It would help to provide voters a tutorial of these sleazy and treasonous Democrat scandals.

Back to the present, the Dems pretend they are opposed to foreign election interference, even though they facilitate unlawful voting by countless foreign invaders every four years. (See John Fund's *Stealing Elections*. Trump tried to create a commission to verify the magnitude of Democrat election fraud, but the effort fizzled. Too bad his advisers were too ignorant to tell him that available data already support his estimate of millions of illegal votes per presidential election.) But now Trump can call the Dems' bluff. "You don't like foreign interference in U.S. elections?" he can say. "OK, we'll have law enforcement at every polling station this year to prevent unregistered or illegal voters from casting votes." Voter suppression, the Dems will aver, as they always do. Yes, just like Repubs have long tried to suppress illegal or unregistered voters, and dead voters.

Note for posterity: If Trump does not do something like this described preventive, along with action against the mail-in fraud scheme, Biden will win (on the scoreboard, if not on the playing field), the Democrats will legalize all 20 million or so illegal aliens as loyal Dem voters,

and Republicans will never win another presidential election. Thus would be established the Democrat dream of a permanent, one-party, socialist dictatorship. And what has been the nature of every leftist dictatorship in world history? Farewell free country. Pleasant dreams, comrades.

Note to Trump: If you don't enact measures to prevent the Dems from stealing this election, the United States of America comes to an end. I hope you realize that. More to the point, the Trump campaign needs to understand the mortal gravity.

Indeed, we are in the final stages of the prospective socialist takeover of the United States. Just as the last century's Socialist Party of America predicted, socialism will take over the U.S. through the Democrat Party. It might help to report this prophetic forecast to voters. Years ago, socialist takeover concern would have appeared kook material. Not anymore.

One asset the Dems have recently energized for Trump is their own misrule. Trump should incessantly remind voters that (1) every American city in ruins has been run by Dems for decades and (2) virtually every state in or near bankruptcy has been run by Dems for decades. So if voters want their home town or state to look like California, Illinois, New York State, Seattle, Portland, Chicago, New York City, L.A., San Francisco, Minneapolis, or Baltimore, then keep voting Democrat. With blue state governors already ruining state economies, (3) usurping individual rights, and now (4) collaborating with mayors to allow mob riots in major cities, American voters have gotten a preview of what life will be like if Democrats take power again.

Mr. Trump, you need to bring the public in on the Democrats' cynical scheme. Rebuttal to the latest Democrat/Biden nonsense slander is straightforward: The Dems riot, Dem politicians aid and abet the rioters, Dems support the rioters financially (who paid for those pallets of bricks?), and then they claim the rioting is the fault of "Trump's America"! If that were true, however, the violence would be occurring throughout the country. No, it is only seen in the Dem-controlled

areas. QED. Then the kill shot for the Trump side: Note how the Dems are willing to sacrifice the lives of African Americans in riot violence just to advance their political aims.

Corollary detail: If Joe Biden were to win the Presidency, he would not be the real chief executive for long. He would be run by the socialist, anarchist, behind-the-scenes Dem establishment until they move him out and move in their real ruler. Who, Hillary? AOC? Pelosi/Schumer? Michelle Obama? George Soros? There is fertile political ground to plow here, very fertile because it is true.

Mr. President, the only reason you won last time is that the electorate collectively dislikes Hillary even more than it dislikes you. That advantage does not apply this time, so you need to link Biden to Hillary and her fellow deplorables whenever possible.

How exactly to handle the huge issue of post-Minneapolis BLM riots and radical Democrat policy initiatives? Again, with the truth: We had a brief moment of national unity over George Floyd, and then the Democrats ruined it — because they needed to for their agenda of national division. The Dems, taken over by their radical elements, now intend to install not only socialism but anarchy by eliminating the police, as they have affirmed. Make sure voters know all this.

Here's the punchline for the whole election audience: "What if the rioters decide to take over your neighborhood, or your home? Now we know a Democrat mayor, governor, or president will do nothing to stop them." Again, rational plus emotional wins the case. Framing the campaign as choosing between police and rioters is apt.

Of course the Dems will play dirty in the campaign, as usual. Following upon the Russia and Ukraine lies, there will be more. Reminding voters of past Dem lies will help inoculate against new ones. But Mr. Trump, unfortunately, has some unsavory moments in his own past that Dems will summon and exploit. The main defense, preferably in Trump's own voice, would be: "None of that matters — because I did those

things when I was a Democrat. That's the way Democrats behave, not Republicans. When I became a Republican, I had a moral conversion, so I'm no longer the same person. That old Democrat Trump is not this Donald Trump." Bingo. You're welcome.

Tactical Details and Conclusion

Before launching any public communication strategy, the content should be tested. What many political marketers don't seem to realize is that this does not mean focus group testing. Focus groups are tolerable for limited, preliminary purposes, but should always be augmented by more formal experimental or survey research. (The latter means "poll" testing.) Focus groups alone cannot be trusted. Among several reasons, they may not be representative and the environment is unnatural. Reflect on ones you've seen operated on TV, and you will understand.

By all means, stop lowering expectations for Biden. Stop lowering the bar. That is one of the most basic blunders in marketing because it makes it easier for the rival product, Biden in this case, to meet the test.

If the Trump campaign hasn't yet scrapped the idea of replacing the MAGA slogan and acronym with "KAG" (Keep America Great), it should. Using "KAG" would be a gift to the Dems because within days, their propagandists would have half the country's minorities believing that the "K" signifies KKK. For the KAG acronym even to be considered illustrates the limitations of the Trump team, to put it charitably.

No more mass rallies? A loss, sure — so innovate something else. As FDR created the fireside chats, Trump should be the first president to use PowerPoint presentations instead of the deadly dull talking-head mode. Trump's people should have thought of this long ago.

Again on the "inside baseball" of political operations, the Trump campaign should investigate diligently for opposition spies, moles, or saboteurs within the organization. It sure appears that there may be some, as there clearly are within the administration.

One thing Democrat marketers know all about is emotional appeal, which works especially well on Democrat and independent voters because so many of them "think" or react emotionally more than rationally. So, to chip away at movable fragments of the opposition's base, incorporate appeal to emotion. Some of the preceding examples do so to a degree. (Most rational voters already support you, Mr. Trump.) Here is another possibility: Take advantage of natural anger at China. Promise retaliation of some kind for their intentional mass manslaughter of 200k Americans.

Intentional? Yes. Regardless of whether the virus came from a bat cave, a "wet" market, or a lab, and regardless of whether its origin was a bio-weapon or not, the Chinese Communist Party engineered its infliction upon the rest of the world by not restricting foreign travel from Wuhan, as it did with domestic Chinese travel. This confirms the extent of China's culpability, and Americans need to be made conscious of it, and angry about it. Also a good idea to simultaneously remind voters about China's ownership of Joe Biden.

Feel the anger? You should, and so should the American electorate.

One more for Mr. Trump: Cue voters to appreciate the one president in memory who really did keep his promises. That should resonate on both emotional and rational levels. The Trump peacemaking successes, achieved while rebuilding the military, should be front and center (and contrasted with the terrible and costly "O'Biden" Iran deal). Also highlight Donald Trump's nature as a non-politician as reason for the rare authenticity. Don't ever allow the candidate to reference himself as a politician. Then, as a final adjunct, make one new promise: If re-elected, President Trump will reveal the whole truth about the JFK assassination and UFO's — and maybe even the Clinton circle of mysterious, unsolved, violent fatalities. Converting the intense followers of those issues — largely non-Republican voters — may be enough to carry the election. You do need to pull out all the stops after the poor campaign effort so far.

Reflection

Because of the supreme stakes for the nation and the new radical extremity of the Democrat Party, this usually non-partisan observer submits the position that a Democrat win in the 2020 election means catastrophe for America. In fact, given the Dems' declared intentions, it would likely precipitate the end of the U.S.A. Not just the end of our country as we know it, it would be omega, ultimately translating into pseudo-existence as a colony of China — along with axis-

of-evil accomplices Iran, Russia, North Korea, and ISIS. (Visualize a heavily armed ISIS or al-Qaeda thug as the cop on the street corner ten years hence.) Therefore, I offer professional advice to Republican political marketers to help forestall national doom. It comes with a guarantee of value in excess of the price paid. The Trump campaigners are not doing everything wrong, only the most important things. America cannot risk their ultimate failure. ♦

The New Feudalism: Why States Must Repeal Growth-Management Laws

Growth-management laws and plans, which strictly regulate what people can and cannot do with their land in the name of controlling urban sprawl, do far more harm than good and should be repealed. To correct the problems created by growth management, states should restrict the authority of municipal governments, especially counties, to regulate land uses.

Some 13 states have growth-management laws that require local governments to attempt to contain urban growth. These laws take development rights from rural landowners and effectively create a “new feudalism” in which the government decides who gets to develop their land and how. The strictest laws are in California and Hawaii, followed by Oregon, Washington, New Jersey, and several Northeastern states.

Growth-management advocates say that their policies protect farms and open space, save energy and reduce air pollution, and reduce urban service costs. However, farms and open space hardly need saving, as the nation has an abundance of both. There are much better ways of saving energy and reducing pollution that cost less and don't make housing unaffordable. Finally, the costs of growth management are far greater than the costs of letting people live in densities that they prefer.

As compared to the trivial or nonexistent benefits of growth management, the costs are huge. Median home prices in growth-managed regions are typically two to four times more than those in unmanaged areas. Growth restrictions also dramatically increase home price volatility, making homeownership a riskier investment. Growth management slows regional growth, exacerbates income inequality, and particularly harms low-income families, especially minorities such as African Americans and Latinos.

The key to keeping housing affordable is exactly the opposite of what growth management prescribes: minimizing the regulation of vacant lands outside of incorporated cities. Allowing developers to build on those lands in response to market demand will also discourage cities from overregulation lest they unnecessarily push development outside the city.

— Randal O'Toole, *Cato Policy Analysis* No. 802, Dec. 18, 2016

COVID Economics in Indiana

According to the Philadelphia Federal Reserve's Coincident State Indexes, Indiana was the state most like the average United States' experience.

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Most of us have experienced more than a few recessions in our lifetime, some mild and some quite severe. None of us, however, had experienced heretofore a recession like the one in 2020. This is not a typical recession with a broad downturn. Instead, it's a series of micro-recessions and micro-recoveries. Some industries have flourished while others have floundered. When we examine the groupings within these industries, the variance increases all the more.

But it is not just different industries that have been affected by micro-recessions and micro-recoveries, it is also the various states that have undergone a wide range of consequences from pandemic-related pressures and government responses. These different effects by state-by-state have several causes, including the severity of COVID infection, the reaction by government, and the structure of the regional industries present.

The Differences Between States Have Been Magnified

One way of examining the differences between states is to examine the Philadelphia Federal Reserve's Coincident State Indexes. The Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia produces a monthly coincident index for each of the 50 states. These indicators are indexed to each state's gross

domestic product; they are created to demonstrate overall economic performance at a state level. The coincident indexes combine four state-level indicators to summarize current economic conditions in a single statistic. The four state-level variables in each coincident index are non-farm payroll employment, average hours worked in manufacturing by production workers, the unemployment rate and wage and salary disbursements.

In examining these state-specific indexes the differences between well-performing states and underperforming states has widened during the pandemic (roughly the period beginning in February 2020). Performance gaps between well-performing and underperforming states historically widen during a recession; this was certainly the case during the recession of the 1990s and the Great Recession of 2008-09. However, the discrepancies experienced this year between states are the widest of such economic differences by geography in recent times.

The dip (i.e. recession) and the beginning of the recovery can be seen in the accompanying diagram for Indiana¹, the states surrounding Indiana and the United States as a whole. Neither Indiana nor the surrounding states incurred as mild a recession as the country in general. However, as compared with its neighboring states, Indiana was the state that was most like the average United States' experience.

Different reactions to recession among states are to be expected. Some states are more reliant on industries that are especially vulnerable to the pandemic. The tourism industry was an example of an industry particularly hard hit in this recession. Restaurant, hotel and airline revenue and profits fell precipitously this time around and those states that drew a higher percentage of their income from these sources saw large declines in their indexes. The energy industry was also particularly hard hit in this recession; North Dakota, which extracts more oil through shale extraction than all the oil produced per year in Alaska, was severely impacted negatively. In Indiana, the author filled up at a price of \$1.13 per

gallon during the pandemic; that historically low price implies a weak energy market.

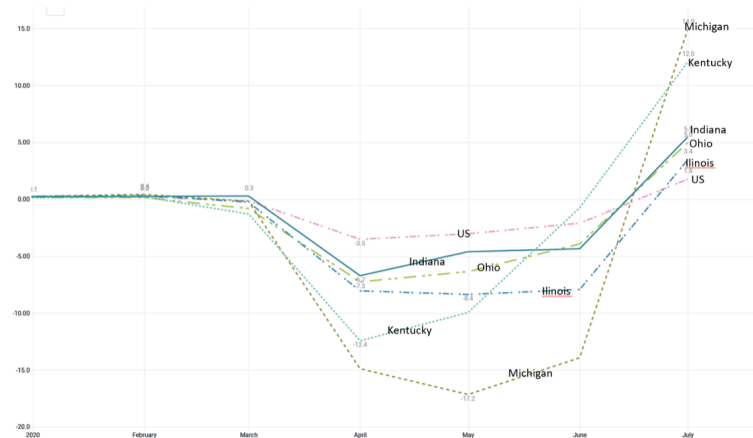
Restrictions imposed by government entities also made this recession unlike those in recent times. Compelled to operate on a fraction of their capacity, or to close altogether, firms in some states were affected much more severely than in other states. New York seemed to be the epicenter of the pandemic early in the year and the government shutdown was draconian. Some estimate that one-third of New York City restaurants will not open even after the pandemic. News stories report New Yorkers leaving the city in droves. Texas was hit later in the year with the brunt of the pandemic but the government there responded with restrictions that were much less severe.

A look at the State Coincident Indexes for Texas and New York² compared tells the story of the differential impact of regulation on their businesses. In Texas, the effect of the government responses was less severe and the recovery started earlier than New York's recovery. The different trajectories for Indiana compared to its neighbors is less dramatic than the New York-Texas comparison, but some of the differences are also undoubtedly due to differences in the government responses.

2. Philadelphia Federal Reserve's Coincident State Indexes for Indiana and Neighboring States for New York and Texas



1. Philadelphia Federal Reserve's Coincident State Indexes for Indiana and Neighboring States



The Wall Street Journal reported in its Sept. 29 issue that individual earnings dropped most in states with stricter and longer closures. The Journal cited those states in which earnings dropped the most and, coincidentally, had draconian closures: New York (-36.8 percent), New Jersey (-31.5 percent), California (-30.8 percent) and Connecticut (-29 percent). By contrast, the following states saw smaller earnings drops, probably due, according to the Journal, to allowing more industries to operate and allowing others to gradually reopen: Utah (-14 percent), Arizona (-18.1 percent), Texas (-21.6 percent), and Florida (-22.3 percent). The differences in the Coincident State Indexes are all the more informative if we add some information about

which of the states residents received the largest annualized per-capita increases in transfer payments (i.e., stimulus funds). Indiana's neighbor to the west, Illinois, had \$9,233 in increased transfer payments, while Indiana residents had only \$6,085. New York's residents received a hefty \$9,030 while Texas residents made do with an increase of \$6,450. The University of Chicago economists estimated that 76 percent of all unemployed workers made more being unemployed than employed with the median wage replacement at 145 percent of their working salary. The

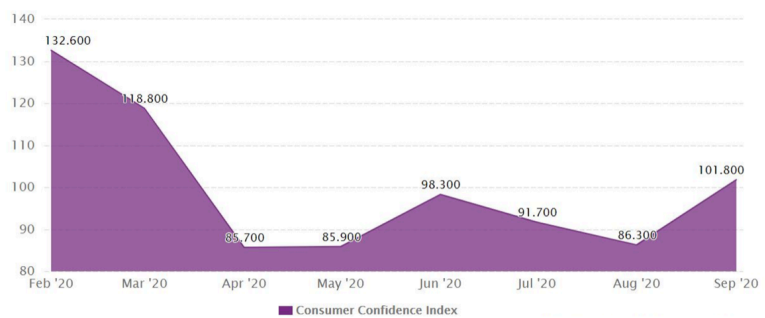
difference in lockdown strictness shows up clearly in the Coincident State Indexes, but the generous transfer payments seem to have made little difference.

Where Are We Headed?

Economic recovery is tied directly to the consumer confidence in their safety and ability to spend. This year we have seen some of the steepest declines in consumer confidence, as well as one of the single largest increases. The confidence index³ does not necessarily tell what people are doing, But the index does tell us that they are thinking of doing something.

There is tremendous value in looking at consumer sentiment metrics and consumer expectation metrics because everything has changed with COVID-19. The latest index report shows a dramatic jump from 86.3 to 101.8; what

3. Consumer Confidence Index from the Conference Board



consumers are thinking tends to be a self-fulfilling prophesy economists have noted. Other factors, of course, remain important. How much income do consumers have? How many jobs are there? Those are the core principles of what drives an economy, and they will remain important. But, consumer confidence gives us a look forward, and, at this moment in time, it looks as if we are headed in the right direction. ♦

Chinese Communists See State Officials as U.S. 'Weak Link'

Chinese leader Xi Jinping believes sub-national-level officials are a “weak link” that can be exploited to advance the regime’s interests in the United States, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Sept. 23.

In a speech at the Wisconsin state capitol, Pompeo urged U.S. politicians from state to municipal level to be alert to the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) “influence and espionage activities.” “Know that when you are approached by a Chinese diplomat, it is likely not in the spirit of cooperation or friendship,” Pompeo said.

The secretary said the CCP has for decades “deployed friendly language while stealing from our innovators, building military strength, and co-opting our elites.”

For instance, he offered a “translation” of Xi’s remarks in August to a group of government economists and sociologists in Beijing: “We must actively develop cooperation with all countries, regions, and enterprises willing to cooperate with us, including states, localities, and enterprises in the United States.”

Pompeo said, “Xi knows that the federal government is pushing back against the CCP’s malign influence,” so he “thinks you’re the weak link.” For Xi, “‘cooperation’ and ‘opening-up’ means the CCP wants to create arrangements that only benefit the CCP,” Pompeo added.

The ultimate goal of the regime’s malign influence activities is to “make Americans receptive to Beijing’s form of authoritarianism,” he warned. — *Cathy He writing in the Sept. 23, 2020, Epoch Times*

Eric Schansberg

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Radical Chic and Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers



This short book by the late Tom Wolfe is a combination of two delicious and insightful essays written 50 years ago by Tom Wolfe. *Radical Chic* tells about the intersection of black “Radicals” and white “Chic” — in particular, cosmopolitan mover-shakers like Leonard Bernstein throwing parties to raise money and prestige for the Black Panthers.¹ (45) The Chic’s wealth created a dilemma and a “most desperate search” for white servants from South America (7). Beyond race, it was uncomfortable to have any servants — if one was working toward equality — but servants (and good interior design work) were simply a must (8, 36-37).

Wolfe notes the reflexive strains of elitism among the Chic — for example, in the exquisite details of a “sweet potato pone” recipe: what it looks like when standard African-American fare is made by rich, white people (26). He describes this (and *Radical Chic* in general) as *nostalgie de la boue* (a French phrase translated “nostalgia of the mud”). Elites look to distance themselves from the despised middle class by combining “the trappings of aristocracy” and “the gauche thrill of taking on certain styles of the lower orders.” (27)

“Mau-mauing” is a term for confrontation and threats, where those attacked are “catching flak.” In this context, Wolfe describes the flak that black activists were giving to white, second-tier bureaucrats in government offices (94-95). Wolfe describes it as mostly theater (87-89) — a “tactic, a

procedure, a game.” (107) The goal was intimidation, not damage: “terrify but don’t touch.” (107) It felt good to flex and it was fun to take away a bureaucrat’s “manhood.” (102) Sometimes, the displays generated enough fear to produce resources. But often, they accomplished little of substance, when there was insufficient energy and organization to get through the slog of the bureaucracy.

Radical Chic and Mau-Mauing Today

One can see many parallels to current events. For one thing, the Radicals did not represent the majority or even a significant slice of “the black community.” As such, the Black Panthers struggled to find churches or other groups that would work with them (51). Today, for example, it’s not at all clear that demands to “defund the police” represent the average African-American.

“Compromised” Civil Rights leaders were in danger of being attacked by Radicals. Bayard Rustin was not at Bernstein’s party because of threats on his life (55). Today, some African-Americans aren’t considered “black” if they hold certain positions. “Cancel culture” looks to re-write history, punish long-past mistakes and crucify people who are not sufficiently “woke” — all in the name of diversity and tolerance. And of course, we’ve seen violence, mayhem and rioting stemming from what should have been peaceful protests.²

The Black Panthers demanded change, but it was not clear what they wanted to do instead. Wolfe relays a funny discussion where partygoers ask reasonable questions about the path forward. When no answers are given, Bernstein sums it up by asking, “You mean, you’re just going to wing it?” (57) Today, we see calls for “revolution,” but with little apparent sense of what would replace it. “Defund the police”? OK, and then what? Reparations? How will you do that with more than

¹ RC reads like a who’s-who of the rich and famous. Of names I did not recognize, Carter and Amanda Burden were apparently at the top of the food chain (43-44). Amanda later married Steve Ross and was domestic partners with Charlie Rose.

² Wolfe (66) tells of a black leader who spoke at the party and apologized for failing the younger generation, since “non-violence didn’t work.” Fifty years later, I saw a YouTube video of a prominent preacher in Louisville who apologized for the same thing.

a semblance of justice and efficiency, in a manner that will clearly help?

It's always difficult to do government activism well in practice, rather than merely on paper. Wolfe points to one significant barrier — at least at that time: Officials did not know the community leaders. Ironically, they valued “mau-mauing” because it signaled who “the leaders” were — well, at least leaders of some sort (104-106). Outside the churches, who are the “community organizers”?

As today, competing interest groups wrestled over status, victimhood, political attention, etc. In Wolfe's context, Jews had helped Blacks form their groups. But in the name of black solidarity, they were eventually ousted. And then, ironically, Blacks began to support Arab causes contrary to Jewish interests (71-73). Today, we see squabbles between the interests of those involved in “identity politics.” (Nationally, there was the recent boycott of Goya Foods; in Louisville, we've seen “mafia tactics” used against a Cuban restaurant.) Are you paying attention to us? Are your grievances bigger than mine? What about my rights?

The Chic were, at least in part, interested in assuaging their own guilt and justifying their wealth and status. Wolfe relays a story where a black student crushes a white teacher for using a woke book: “Ghetto people would laugh if they heard what you just read. That book wasn't written for the ghettos. It was written for the white middle class . . . That book is the best suburban jive I've ever heard.” (110)

Today, popular books are much more focused on relieving “white guilt”³ about “white privilege” than actually dealing with key problems for the poor in general and the African-American poor in particular. For all of the talk about anecdotal personal racism and pervasive systemic racism, there is little discussion about brutal public policies such as welfare, K-12 education, the War on Drugs, labor market regulations, Social Security and so on (aside from modest interest in police reform).

Finally, the elite didn't get it — and often don't get it today. Romanticizing violence and thuggery is never cool. Applauding destruction is never helpful. In our time, many of the Left have no clue why Trump won. They don't understand that insisting on lockdowns for Covid and encouraging protests had to be seen as hypocrisy. Black lives matter to most people, but the BLM movement goes far beyond that. Most common folk understand these things.

The Bernstein party received flattering news coverage from the New York Times. But this resulted in “an international chorus of horse laughs or nausea” outside those circles⁴ (68-69) — and even a critical editorial in the Times. Few prominent editorial boards still think in these terms, but maybe you can imagine some version of their editorial today:

“Emergence of the Black Panthers as the romanticized darlings of the politico-cultural jet set is an affront to the majority of black Americans. This so-called party, with its confusion of Mao-Marxist ideology and Fascist para-militarism . . . the group therapy plus fund-raising soirée . . . represents the sort of elegant slumming that degrades patrons and patronized alike. It might be dismissed as guilt-relieving fun spiked with social consciousness, except for its impact on those blacks and whites seriously working for complete equality and social justice. It mocked the memory of Martin Luther King Jr., whose birthday was solemnly observed throughout the nation yesterday.”

The mocking has been resurrected in today's radicals. King's vision is inverted. Racism is practiced while it is condemned. The ends justify the means. The “fight for justice” is all too serious on the one hand — and downright silly on the other. There is much work to be done to improve society and public policy, but sadly, neither the Radical nor the Chic are much help.

³ Wolfe (41) notes the excitement that they would not get a tax deduction for donating to the Panthers—an excellent way to virtue signal.

⁴ Bernstein was booed at concerts soon afterwards and Wolfe imagines him thinking of the audience as “secret candy-store bigots.” (81)

Destructive Generation

Peter Collier and David Horowitz were among the leaders in the Sixties “Radical” movement. But when its fruit became apparent to them over the next decade, they converted from the Left.

“Destructive Generation” is a useful history of the late 1960s and early 1970s in America. The authors’ applications to the 1980s are provocative even when not convincing. (The parallels to today are more impressive.) And their story of intellectual and ideological transformation is compelling.

The first four chapters are mini-biographies of some key players during the Sixties. Chapter 1 relates the sad tale of Fay Stender — a lawyer and activist whose story turns out to be a catalyst for their conversion. Chapter 2 covers “Billy” Ayers, Bernadine Dohrn and the Weather Underground. Chapter 3 is about an obscure pair of Marine Corps buddies in Vietnam who end up on different sides of the law when they return. Chapter 4 discusses Huey Newton and the Black Panthers.

The second quartet of chapters speaks to some of the reasons for their conversion: some absurdities of the Left (Chapter 5); the McCarthy era on the Right with applications to the Left in the Sixties (Chapter 6); a history of Berkeley (Chapter 7); and the Left’s positions in the 1980s on foreign policy (Chapter 8). A final trio of chapters is more directly auto-biographical — a chapter written by each author and then a closing chapter describing their “journey” so far.

The book opens with “epiphany” — a popular term among radicals in the Sixties: “It tended to elevate life’s commonplaces . . . part of the decade’s transcendental conviction that there was something apocalyptic lurking behind the veil of the ordinary, and that just a little more pressure was needed to . . . [break] through to the other side.” (14) But it’s a later epiphany which leads to their break from the movement. As they wrote about Stender, who was viciously attacked by African-Americans she had defended, they were appalled that she was “taken advantage of and debased by” her previous allies on the Left (303). Not surprisingly, Collier and

Horowitz were then pilloried by the Left for describing this history, further speeding their exodus.

The Stender episode illustrates a common progression of legalism and fanaticism within idealism.⁵ Who is pure enough? Who is willing to sacrifice for the Cause? Strict standards often lead to hypocrisy, legalism, fanaticism, “sectarian ecstasies” and ultimately “cannibalism” of the movement (61, 156). When Stender was shot multiple times and paralyzed, some of her friends were suddenly worried about a criminal getting out on technicalities, while others defended her attacker and called her defenders racist (57). Even the Weather Underground were later labeled “racist.” (114)

Vietnam also persuaded Collier and Horowitz to leave, since it didn’t turn out nearly as promised by the Left. After America left the field, “what we had dismissed as impossible was happening with dizzying speed.” Occupation, bloodbaths, re-education, boat people, Cambodian genocide and an aggressive USSR moving into the foreign policy vacuum. More people were “killed in the first two years of the Communist peace than in the 13 years of American war.” (174)

Collier, Horowitz and others “challenged the survivors of the New Left to live up to their claims to be partisans of social justice and the rights of the oppressed.” (175) Many doubled down instead. But the convicted began to meet and find their voice. Collier and Horowitz and others formed a “Second Thoughts Conference” where future luminaries like Richard John Neuhaus, Ronald Radosh, Michael Novak, Michael Medved gathered to discuss their past and the future (350-358).

The Destructive Generation Then

Collier and Horowitz describe 1968 as “the great unraveling of the Sixties” — from Tet and the assassinations of MLK Jr. and RFK, to LBJ’s withdrawal from the presidential race and the riot at the Democratic Convention in Chicago (“the Kristallnacht of the New Left” [291]). Among other

⁵ We see these tendencies today on the Left today with “cancel culture.”

things, faith in democracy was supplanted by a passion for radical change. “By the end of the Sixties, participatory democracy was a language no longer spoken on the Left. Its slogans had changed . . .” to ideologies like Marxist-Leninist (171). “But while we wanted a revolution, we didn’t have a plan.” (15)

The book overlaps with subjects in Tom Wolfe’s writing. Whites, especially Jews, were instrumental in helping many of the “Black Power” groups start. But then they were kicked out in the name of self-determination (28). The Black Panthers were a notable exception (29), leading to the wonderful moments described by Wolfe in *Radical Chic*. Collier and Horowitz provide the picture of well-dressed Black Panthers patrolling the streets with guns — “irresistible, especially for white New Leftists.” (147) Huey Newton was invited to co-lead a seminar on racism at Yale (153). And after mentioning Bernstein’s party, Collier and Horowitz describe the Panthers as “one part model for radical self-sacrifice and one part house pet of radical chic.” (149)

Wolfe wrote about the limited connection between the radicals and the community they claimed to represent. Collier and Horowitz tell us that they “had no base in Berkeley’s black community, which in fact was deeply suspicious of the radicals and resented what it regarded as their manipulation of racial and ethnic issues.” (224) A telling example: the community was not excited about the radical push to rename a historically important street name to “MLK Way.” They didn’t want to lose the former name and recognized that “many of those now pushing the name change had dismissed King in the Sixties as a sellout and a ‘Tom.’”⁶ (228)

Collier and Horowitz discuss the parallels between the Far Left and the Far Right, but note a key difference: the Far Left are utopians with a

“religious confusion and moral corruption that defines [it] . . . If self-righteousness is the moral oxygen of the radical creed, self-deception is the marrow of its immune system.” (247) They quote Arthur Koestler here: “Clinging to the last shred of the torn illusion, is typical of the cowardice that prevails on the Left.” (347)

Good intentions easily trump good results. Wishful thinking: If we only had more competent people in charge, better plans, purer purpose — always, the next time. “Stalin’s reign was the consequence of a bad man rather than a bad theory and a bad system.” (250) Blame evasion — whether earnest and blind, or as a cynical grasp for future power. “They manufacture innocence out of guilt: It is the eternal work of the Left . . . For Leftists, there are only tomorrows. They never talk about the evil they have done, except superficially, to imply that it has increased their moral sensitivity. But they are always anxious to discuss the utopia to come.” (245)

This also leads to the ends justifying the methods — to accomplish goals “by any means necessary.” (173) And they are willing to define “the truth” strategically: “the radical willingness to tinker with the facts to serve a greater truth.”⁷ (37) One manifestation of this: the use of “the political defense” for criminals — not denying the crime, but blaming the system: “an attack, rather than a defense, by charging that America’s law enforcement was homicidal and its criminal justice system infected with racism.” (147)

A Destructive Generation Now

As they wrote this in the late 1980s, Collier and Horowitz saw an impending renaissance of the New Left (15, 266). But the ascendancy was still 20 years in the future — perhaps superseded by the transcendence of the USSR’s implosion a few years later. One aspect they saw — which was true then

⁶ Another example of Berkeley’s heterogeneity: By 1985, 22% of its students were in private schools—twice the state average (234).

⁷ “Faith and terror are the twin pillars of the revolution’s defense.” (249) This is reminiscent of the two Beasts in Revelation 13—the State and False Religion.

and continues today — is a romanticized view of the 1960s and Socialism.⁸ The 1960s continue to be recast as “a golden age” with “energy and excitement . . . commitment and belief.” (243) Socialism is imagined as bigger government, rather than its bloody history and the State owning the means of production.

The connections to today are more obvious. The “liberated zones” and “a bloody war with the police forces of several cities” are reminiscent of this year in Portland, Seattle, Chicago, etc. (34) Smashing windows, setting cars on fire and “trashing the famed Chicago Gold Coast” sounds familiar (88-89). Nothing has equaled the Weather Underground’s bombing of the U.S. Capitol, but the year isn’t over yet (105).

Something akin to “cancel culture” was in play with McCarthyism in the 1950s and its sequel on the Left in the 1960s. Collier and Horowitz saw glimpses of it in the 1980s — e.g., Roger Wilkins calling Thomas Sowell “an enemy of his people.” (196) In those days, the only thing “out of bounds in the political debate” is whether you “are or were or might have been” a Communist (197). But Collier and Horowitz were prescient in imagining a resurgence in our times with the Pharasaism of political correctness — and now, the fascism of cancel culture. Even then, they saw this illiberal impulse as “a way of embargoing ideas that the Left dislikes and invoking cloture on debates that it doesn’t want to have.” (197)

Collier and Horowitz argue that “the history of McCarthyism actually shows how alien the witch-hunt mentality is to the American spirit . . . brief in its moment and limited in its consequences. And it was complete in the way it was purged from the body politic. [McCarthy’s] strut on the stage ended in a crushing repudiation by his colleagues . . . and [he has] an enduring obloquy in the rogues’ gallery

of American history,” along with Benedict Arnold and a few others (195-196). But with cancel culture’s power and popularity today, one might wonder if McCarthyism is so aberrant after all.

Balko’s Rise of the Warrior Cop: The Militarization of America’s Police Forces

Radley Balko’s 2013 book is a combination of history and policy analysis of American policing efforts after World War II. Balko starts with the provocative question of whether police are constitutional — before wrestling with the contexts in which their use is ethical and practical. Then he provides a brief but useful survey of police history before the 1960s.

The American colonists were greatly upset about the British practice of “writs.” (8) The king was imposing heavy taxes, which led to smuggling and then attempts to curtail it. The writs were general warrants, granting broad authority to British soldiers to enforce the law. The colonists were not happy about either the wide-ranging powers (including the ability to search anything and to seize suspicious items) or soldiers as the enforcing agents.

By the time of the American Revolution, the Founding Fathers were concerned about both Roman history⁹ (1) and the British military in their roles as a police force (xi). The anti-federalists were especially worried, but the federalist concern about external threats (and thus, the need to raise an army) carried the day (15). This was cemented by Shays Rebellion and the usefulness of federal troops to collect taxes and keep the peace on occasion (16-18).

With British abuses, American independence and British influence through common law and rule of law, the “Castle Doctrine” was popularized: one’s home is one’s castle. We can defend our homes and

⁸ This is in contrast to earlier riots that are not glorified by anyone—e.g., against Blacks in the early 20th century or against Catholics in the 19th century.

⁹ After the execution of Julius Caesar, elite troops were used as bodyguards (Praetorians). Soon, they were used to investigate serious crimes, provide security, gather intelligence—and even to fight fires and collect taxes. The military were not allowed into Rome, so the eventual blurring between the police and the military caused troubles until the Praetorians were disbanded by Constantine in 312 AD (2-3). Balko (4-5) also describes English efforts, especially before the Norman Conquest, the English used a localized, hierarchical police-like system. The officers were called tythings, shires and reeves—the combination of the latter two leading to our word “sheriff.”

we should not be subject to unreasonable treatment of our property by the government (6). This led to the 3rd and 4th Amendments: the government can neither quarter soldiers in our homes nor search or seize our property.

Until the early-mid-19th century, justice was meted out through community standards, social stigma, “informal justice” and vigilantism. Private citizens were all involved in the process — a “universal duty” instead of something done by the government. Sheriffs, constables and marshals were largely administrative and part-time unpaid positions. Imprisonment for punishment was rare (x-xi, 28). As cities became more densely populated and more heterogeneous, a police force became more practical. Manifestations differed by region: night watch patrols in the North; slave patrols in the South; and vigilantes and police-for-hire in the West.¹⁰ (28-29)

The American militarization of the police begins with efforts to enforce the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act in the North (19-23). The next episode was Reconstruction — with the military used to impose laws in the South (23-25). Police reform was a key facet of the Progressive Era, ranging from efforts to eliminate patronage, professionalize the police and use the police to enforce morality (31-33). Finally, Civil Rights legislation in the Jim Crow South required the use of government troops — again, putting the military in a heavy policing role (40-41).

Policy and Incentives

One of the great things about Balko’s book is that it’s written before the current controversies over police policy. So we can trust its perspective, rather than being tempted to see it in partisan or political terms. Moreover, he is a libertarian, so his criticisms are both bipartisan and objective. He is also careful to say that his book is not anti-cop — but rather, anti-policy and anti-politician. When politicians pass policies that create strong incentives, you can blame individuals, but you should start with the system.

For example, “no-knock” warrants and “stop-and-frisk” policies get going in 1964 under Gov. Nelson Rockefeller (R-NY). There was momentum from police and politicians — and the courts did not stand in the way, starting with *Ker vs. California* in 1963 (44, 48-49). By 1969, 25 states had a no-knock law (75). The federal government began to use it frequently in 1972, but Sen. Sam Ervin (D-NC) successfully crusaded against it being extended to D.C. (88, 93-94). The federal law grew more unpopular and was repealed in 1975 (123-124). They also faded at the state level, before growing again with the reinvigorated War on Drugs in the 1980s.

The courts were a mixed bag, despite some infamy in protecting the rights of the accused. The Warren Court also bolstered the capacity of the police to act, especially in more-forceful ways (53-56). In fact, the last big Supreme Court ruling of the era confirmed the legitimacy of “stop-and-frisk” policies — for no more than “reasonable suspicion” in *Terry vs. Ohio* (1968). “Liberal” court rulings also gave conservatives a useful foil to run as “anti-crime” candidates.¹¹

But Balko’s chief focus is SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) teams — with their armored personnel, military-grade weapons and military training. He is concerned about their militarization and especially their frequent use: They were “. . . once reserved as the last option to defuse a dangerous situation. [Now] increasingly used as the first option to apprehend people who aren’t dangerous at all.” (xii)

Balko is sympathetic to the existence of SWAT teams — but not the eagerness to use them. “This was an understandable response to the growing sense that American cities were spilling over with crime, violence and rioting . . . Assault wasn’t a dirty word. It was an appropriately swift, forceful response to defuse a violent situation . . . But when the riots, strife and unrest finally died down, when the threat of chaos and lawlessness eventually grew

¹⁰ All of these started as voluntary before evolving into paid positions.

¹¹ Although not as dramatic as the Warren Court in the 1960s, the courts continued to weaken constitutional rights in this realm. Balko sprinkles this discussion throughout the book.

remote, the weapons, heavy-duty vehicles and militaristic culture stuck around.” (63-64)

Various events served as catalysts — snipers in the Watts riots in 1965; Charles Whitman in the clock tower at the University of Texas a year later (56-59); Patty Hearst and the Symbionese Liberation Army (126-130). Connecting this to the Wolfe and Collier/Horowitz books, the first SWAT team raid was against the Black Panthers in December 1969 (76).

Pop culture further popularized more aggressive police work. After *Dragnet* in the 1950s, the 1970s gave us the ABC drama *S.W.A.T.*, which led to a board game, lunch boxes, action figures, View-Master sets, puzzles, etc. (131-132) From *Dirty Harry* and *Miami Vice* to *Cops* and *Hill Street Blues*, Hollywood has contributed to a glorious and entertaining view of police work (304-306).¹²

Some of this is probably police preferences — a bias toward using force, often in spectacular ways. Quoting a federal official in 1970: Local and state law enforcement “didn’t value education or training. They valued hardware.” (96) Balko also argues that police departments felt an intense peer pressure to go along with the trend to militarize. Unfortunately, this was a desire “to be up to date without any knowledge of what they’re getting into . . . Soon, just about every decent-sized city police department was armed with a hammer. And the drug war would ensure there were always plenty of fails around for pounding.” (132-133)

All that said, none of this is particularly surprising given the underlying policy incentives — thanks especially to the Federal government (244). For example, “civil asset forfeiture” (CAF) was a powerful motivator to prioritize drug offenses, since law enforcement agencies could keep any assets connected to the crimes. The debut of CAF came in

the 1970s under RICO laws (Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations). In the early 1980s, a GAO report argued that CAF was underutilized and the Reagan administration was happy to seize the opportunity (140-141, 146).

These incentives also created perverse outcomes. More inducements to focus on drugs necessarily meant less emphasis on rape, murder and other crimes (240, 243).¹³ Law enforcement now had an incentive to “find” a connection between property and crime. It was better to arrest people in their homes, so that the house could more easily be seized. It was better to wait until drugs had been sold, so the confiscated booty was cash which could be kept, rather than drugs would need to be destroyed.¹⁴ (153-154)

Other policies also contributed. The government began to sell surplus military equipment to the police (158). The National Guard’s presence was increased and its roles were expanded into standard police activities (36, 179-180).

Homeland Security introduced more funding and more rationales to militarize (242, 254). The conflation of border security and the drug war led to more federal military activity in police matters (244). The drug war also led to the marriage of police and multiple military branches: The Navy intercepted boats that the Coast Guard could search and seize (206).

One irony is that militarization often makes encounters less safe. In discussing the use of flash-bang grenades, Balko notes that they’re useful when dealing with immediate threats.

But in raids for nonviolent offenses (far more frequent), “sowing confusion only increases the potential for violence . . . [You] can’t first claim that the use of flash-bang grenades to stun and confuse people is critically important, then claim that

¹² The pop culture references can cut both ways. Balko (307) notes an episode of *LA Law*, *The Simpsons* and *Chappelle’s Show*. And of course, there are many movies dealing with rogue and corrupt cops.

¹³ Balko (240) shares a story where a cop in a sex crimes unit is frustrated to learn why she had so few resources: most of it was diverted to drug crimes, where the incentives were.

¹⁴ Balko (154) cites research that police were much more likely to stop cars leaving the city (when they had cash) than entering the city (when they had drugs). Balko (272) notes a *Catch-22* in police funding: “If police fatalities go up, it’s an indication that criminals are getting more dangerous and cops need more firepower. If police fatalities go down, it means militarization is working.”

seconds after the device goes off, those same people (many of whom have also just woken up) should be cognizant . . . ” (278)

The presidents

The War on Drugs is a significant piece of the militarization puzzle. Nixon and Reagan are the most famous presidents in this realm. But Balko notes how presidents from Johnson through Obama have been surprisingly active in enhancing police activity.

Johnson was effectively described as soft on crime by the Republicans — as Nixon emphasized the issue in the 1968 election. Then, with the riots in the summer, it became politically advantageous for both parties to get “tough on crime.” Johnson was probably softer than the presidents to come — both in terms of emphasis and preferring cash and social programs over force. Still, he created the first major federal agency to deal specifically with drugs — what would later become the DEA. He also greatly expanded the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration — the first agency to “stream federal funding, equipment and technology directly” to state and local law enforcement. As with other federal grant examples to states, this is a wonderful way to enforce a policy cartel: go with the federal approach or lose funding (64-70).

Nixon didn’t “declare war” on drugs right away, but his early rhetoric was “already slipping into combat fatigues.” (70) In policy terms, Nixon was also quite active (although the details are too much for a review); Ford and Carter stepped back; and then Reagan ran with the ball again.

The Reagan Administration’s first public policy change was to enhance the role of the military in the drug war (145). It got much more active with civil asset forfeiture (141, 146). It focused most of its efforts on marijuana as a gateway drug. Politically popular with the public, Congress passed a big, bipartisan Crime Bill in 1984 before the election — with no real debate (151-152). And in 1986, Reagan connected drugs to national security, spending

more money and promoting more militarization (157).¹⁵

Bush I is infamous for using crime to help him rout Michael Dukakis in the 1988 election. But his biggest contribution was choosing William Bennett as “drug czar.” Bennett’s rhetoric was his innovation: “to infuse it with morality . . . The man who often struggled to control his own indulgences (gambling) was ready to unleash a full federal arsenal of force on people whose indulgences he personally found immoral.” (163-164)

Those who wanted a lighter approach to the “war” had high hopes for Bill Clinton (especially as a former pot smoker). His rhetoric was less inflammatory, but he was still heavy-handed on policy. Agencies were allowed to become less transparent; his drug czar was an actual retired general; and his “troop to cop” program formalized the militarization trends. Balko’s biggest beef with Clinton: his “one strike and you’re out” in public housing served to incentivize police raids on the poor in particular — who could be evicted even if they were not directly involved in a crime (193-195).

The Clinton years also saw the first state-led push toward legalized marijuana. But Clinton and then Bush II warred against this by pushing for federal law to supersede state law (215-217, 250-252). Bush II added SWAT team raids on legal businesses selling pot to cancer and AIDS patients for medicinal use (205). So much for federalism and states’ rights.

Bush II and his drug czar John Walters used 9/11 to further foment the drug war, connecting terrorism to drug use through galling propaganda. The government ran ads claiming that drug use supported the Taliban and therefore terrorism. The reality is that the War on Drugs is — by definition — the direct cause-and-effect to sending money to the Taliban and other groups within organized crime (250-252).

Obama was similar to Clinton: You’d expect a lot more, but he did not deliver and was worse than many other presidents. Obama criticized Bush for

¹⁵ Balko (142) notes the various rationales for a drug war: prejudice (as with George Wallace); the Bible (as with the “Moral Majority”) and intellectual (as promoted by Robert Bork, James Q. Wilson, James Burnham, et. al.).

cutting federal police programs and then enhanced them when he was elected, increasing spending by \$2 billion in 2009 (247-248). All of this served to boost militarization, SWAT teams and multi-jurisdictional anti-drug task forces (218-223). Obama also stepped up federal raids on state-legal marijuana activity — as well as raids on immigrants, doctors and pain clinics (301).

We don't know if Joe Biden will be elected president. But he is one of the "stars" of the book, given his legislative passions and pursuits — and easily its most prominent legislator.¹⁶ Biden commissioned the report that led to increased civil asset forfeiture in the 1980s and authored the resulting civil asset forfeiture bill (140, 146). He coined the term "drug czar" in a 1982 article. Later, Biden "savaged Bennett and Bush's drug plan — for not going far enough," saying it was "not tough enough, bold enough, or imaginative enough to meet the crisis at hand." (167-168) In 1994, Biden authored the "Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act" — a "community policing" bill that, without sufficient direction, ironically ended up funding more militarization (218-219). In 2002, Biden wrote the RAVE Act, which made business owners liable for selling "paraphernalia" used at rave parties — such as bottled water and glow sticks (257). And as noted above, Biden was behind Obama's push to fully fund a federal police program (247-248).

Who else is to blame? Where do we go from here?

The data are clear on these matters. Balko describes the work of Peter Kraska (206-223) as he mined a field that had gone untouched. Kraska

documented the "two-decade insurgence of militarism into just about every city and county in America" — what he called "the militarization of Mayberry." (207) Balko makes clear that this has been a bipartisan effort — from LBJ and Nixon through Bush and Biden. One fruit of this was tremendous growth in the relevant bureaucracies, resulting in inevitable overlaps and inefficiencies.¹⁷ (180)

But the beliefs were so prevalent — in politics and in the general public — that it's difficult to aggressively assign blame. If you were opposed to the consensus, you would have been laughed at or worse.¹⁸ The GOP has the stronger reputation on crime. But often, Democrats felt pressure to go along. Other times, they seemed quite content to go along—or even, to lead the charge (67, 72, 146, 151-152, 167-168).¹⁹

The pattern of less famous abuses did lead thoughtful and engaged people — especially those enmeshed in enforcing the system — to reconsider their approaches. Balko describes the "Second Thoughts" conference about the drug war in 1997 (224ff). And many police leaders have worked to re-emphasize community policing.²⁰ Balko describes many of these efforts throughout the book (97ff, 189ff).

Balko concludes with a call to reform. He begins with a riveting story that should stick in our collective memory: Cheye Calvo, the mayor of Berwyn Heights (309-315), had a horrible run-in with the police who mistakenly accosted him and his family in their home. (Google him if you don't remember.) His fight to pass a transparency bill (315-318) — what should have been a slam dunk,

¹⁶ It's useful that the book was written before Biden was running for president so that it is not seen as partisan.

¹⁷ See: Lawrence Wright's *The Looming Tower* for a parallel in bureaucratic intelligence failures surrounding 9/11.

¹⁸ Another example: Since many people were racists during the Progressive Era, should we crush or merely criticize those who used Darwinism and "race science" to support rank racism and eugenics policies?

¹⁹ For many years, the two parties even avoided blaming each other for mistakes and misuses of power. But partisan and ideological flipping began with some prominent abuses of power—Ruby Ridge in 1992, the Branch Davidians in 1993 and Elian Gonzalez in 2000 (200-206). The latter two were useful politically for the GOP, but all three put conservatives in the strange position of critiquing law enforcement.

²⁰ Balko (34-35) cites technological advance after WWII (e.g., cars, radios) that improved police performance but separated the police from the community, leading almost inexorably to greater animosity.

but was not — and the resulting data (318-320) were fascinating and sobering. From there, Balko lays out policy proposals — from ending the War on Drugs to more modest ideas such as transparency, community policing and accountability (321-332).

The public's desire for safety and fear of criminals has been a key driver in motivating public officials to take action. At times, terrible results have led to questions and some pushback. That said, other high-profile failures — such as SWAT ineptitude and cowardice with school shooters (e.g., Columbine, 230-232) — have not raised much concern. And the extension of SWAT activity into gambling, bingo, barbershops, immigration, massage parlors, child pornography and

cockfighting — from police violence as first-choice rather than last-resort—has not raised many alarms.

The high-profile incidents in the 1990s — like George Floyd and Breonna Taylor today — are probably necessary to get the attention of a “rationally ignorant and apathetic” public (200). Balko also notes the good news that has come with technological advance — that it's easier to record bad behavior and share it with others through social media (242-243). But as he notes at the end (331-332), without public passion against the status quo and vested interests such as police unions, little can be expected to change. ♦

The Stakes: America at the Point of no Return

The combination of the ruling class constituents' fired-up insatiability, the rulers' inability to control them, and the limits of conservative Americans' patience is sure to cause a crisis that ends up in some kind of “Caesarism” of the Left or the Right.

Speculating on what such a crisis might be is not terribly useful because revolutionary scenarios are really all alike, and have been described countless times in similar terms: All sides are readier than they know to pursue their desires by dispensing with order. Something happens that inflames one side and challenges the other. Somebody gets killed. All bets are off.

Consider the 2020 election. In July, the Democratic National Committee engaged some 600 lawyers to litigate the outcome, possibly in every state. No particular outcome of such litigations is needed to set off a systemic crisis. The existence of the litigations themselves is enough for one or more blue state governors to refuse to certify that state's electors to the Electoral College, so as to prevent the college from recording a majority of votes for the winner. In case no winner could be confirmed by January's Inauguration Day, the 20th Amendment provides that Congress would elect the next president. Who doubts that, were Donald Trump the apparent winner, and were Congress in Democratic hands, that this would be likelier than not to happen? Before or afterward, were conservatives not unanimously to roll over, and were a few incidents to result in loss of life and conflict between police forces on opposite sides of the affairs, America might well experience an explosion of pent-up rage less like the American Civil War of the 19th century and more like the horror that bled Spain in the 20th.

— Angelo Codevilla, *“The Finger in the Dike Election,”*
Aug. 210, 2020, *Claremont Review of Books*

Leo Morris

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The Radio Show in my Mind

(Oct. 5) — The president of the United States — the leader of the free world, arguably the most powerful person on the planet — has contracted a dangerous virus, and I'm not sure how I should act.

Oh, I know very well what I'm supposed to do. I must choose a side and root for my team from the sidelines. But how boisterous or subdued should I be, how enthusiastic or fretful?

The problem, I realize, is that I'm missing the prompting I've gotten used to. I need a cheerleader to give me the proper cues.

Like the ones I got when I briefly revisited the world of televised professional sports, after symbolically boycotting them for the intrusion of politics then actually missing them a little when they were adjourned sine die by the Trump-thumping virus.

Instead of making me endure the empty stadiums and eerie silence, the game enablers provided me with cardboard cutouts of fans in the stands and played recorded crowd noises.

It helped me pretend I was watching something important that other people cared about rather than wasting my precious time on a frivolous, meaningless expenditure of testosterone.

And then there is the canned laughter that has been so instrumental in my enjoyment of situation comedies. I have never had to risk being wrong when I decided something was funny enough to be amusing. The chuckle machine showed me the way.

I notice the same laugh track has made an appearance at the return of "Wheel of Fortune" and "Jeopardy!" from their COVID-19 hiatus. I do not think an audience is there, since there are no longer panned shots people applauding. But it sure sounds present and accounted for, snickering or guffawing at the hosts' witticisms.

The people who are not there. Like the sounds that really aren't there in the movies I watch on Netflix that I once would have left the house for. The click of high heels on linoleum. The whoosh of wind in the trees. The crackle of flames in the fireplace.

They're called Foley effects, invented for radio dramas to tickle the imagination. Sound-effects specialists would make bone-injury noises with frozen romaine lettuce, horse-hoof sounds with coconut shells, thunder with thin metal sheets, creaking doors with, well, creaking doors. When sound movies came along, so did the Foley artists to add depth and immediacy to the audio quality.

Reality enhanced. Reality augmented. Reality intensified. We could use that right now.

Donald Trump is, after all, the former reality show star, the first game show host ever elected to the highest office in the land. If we're all just trapped inside the ultimate reality show, shouldn't we demand the ultimate thrill ride until the next commercial break?

Trump's opponents shouldn't have to settle for merely listening to the talking heads at CNN and MSNBC excoriating the president as a fool and a knave and a heartless, incompetent dictator who should just die as soon as possible, drooling and babbling in a virus-induced fever. There should be angry mob noises at the mere sound of his name, shouts and jeers and taunts and the Foley-created sounds of torches being lit and chains being rattled.

And his supporters shouldn't be content with just watching Fox News or listening to Rush Limbaugh to hear that Trump is the best president ever, achieving historic, world-shaking successes despite the obstructionist tactics of his evil, unpatriotic opponents who are little better than treasonous scum. There should be the

sounds of champagne corks popping and the majestic strains of “Hail to the Chief” as the adoring multitudes prayerfully chant his name.

Ah, well.

In the radio show of my mind, I can hear the teeth gnashing, see the hair pulling, feel the cynicism building to a boiling point. Just pick a side, my fans are shouting; tell us who you think is right and wrong. You’re not fooling anyone, my critics are sneering; we know which side you’re really on when you’re not pretending otherwise.

But, gentle readers, during such a grave moment, a potential turning point in our history, shouldn’t we be able to bridge the partisan divide and unite to work together as one great American people on a common purpose with courage and understanding?

Cue wild applause, whistles, stomping of feet, heartfelt laughter and tears of joy, shouts of “Way to go, champ!” and “Atta Boy, Leo” as “America the Beautiful” begins to play. Fade to commercial.

The Holcomb-Myers Malaise

(Sept. 28) — I’m thinking of doing something different in the gubernatorial election. Some will say I would be wasting my vote.

The same temptation teased me in the 2016 presidential election. Disgusted that our political process delivered the two worst candidates imaginable in Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, I flirted with the idea of going third party or simply staying home and not voting at all.

In the end, I resisted the urge.

It was going to be a close enough election that relatively few votes could make a difference. If I abandoned my usual practice – voting for the candidate, however flawed, who most matched my world view – it would not be just a wasted vote. It would have the effect of voting for the other candidate. It made no sense to make a point by voting against my own interests.

But the situation is different in the governor’s race this year, so I’m giving serious thought to ignoring Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb and

Democratic challenger Woody Myers and casting my vote for Libertarian Donald Rainwater.

For one thing, this doesn’t seem to be a close election. Holcomb is likely to win by such a wide margin that an individual ballot will hardly matter. I can use my vote to make a point without worrying about the outcome.

And for another, it’s hard to imagine how I can vote against my interests with Holcomb or Myers when I have such trouble meshing my world view with either one of them.

I struggled toward this conclusion after seeing news reports that the Indiana Debate Commission is asking Hoosiers to send in questions for possible use in the Oct. 20 and 27 debates between the three candidates.

Since everyone else would likely be developing the usual sort of questions that could be answered in 30-second, stump-speech sound bites, I reasoned that I could make a contribution with questions forcing Holcomb to defend his record and the other candidates to offer substantively different approaches. Try as I might, I could not find a major issue I cared about in which Holcomb and Myers could offer me a clear choice.

The governor’s enthusiastic COVID-justified use of the sweeping powers ceded to him by the General Assembly in clear violation of the Indiana Constitution? Myers’ chief complaint against Holcomb is that he did not issue the mask mandate soon enough.

How about the almost complete state takeover of public education, first by the Legislature, then by the governor’s office, despite the fact that none of the politicians know what in the world to do with it? Anyone who thinks Myers would be different should consider that the Republican secretary of education has endorsed him.

Speaking of which, the Indianapolis Star reports that Gov. Holcomb, with his wily, moderate ways, has scored numerous key endorsements from organizations that backed the Democratic nominee four years ago, including major donors such as the state teacher’s union, fraternal order of police and trade groups.

I think of the state's \$2 billion surplus when I make my final effort at candidate differentiation. Holcomb would continue to sit on it forever. Myers would spend it just as quickly as he could. Rainwater is the one who might say, "Wait a minute here, isn't all that loose cash really taxpayer money?"

If I thought it mattered that much, I'm sure I could look harder and find enough reasons to hold my nose and vote for Holcomb, in the faint hope that I would get at least some of the prudence I want in state government. But I don't think it matters that much.

If I end up voting for Rainwater, and enough other disaffected conservatives (we're sneeringly called the "far right" in the mainstream press) do likewise, something interesting might happen.

In the last five gubernatorial elections, the Libertarian share of the vote ranged from a low of 1.29 percent in 2004 to a high of 3.95 percent in 2012. What would happen if, in 2020, the Libertarian broke into double digits or came very close to it?

The potential upside is that the idea of a deliberative, fiscally responsible state that gives up more home rule to cities and counties might take hold again, at least enough for more Hoosiers to consider it a valuable option. The bigger the Libertarian vote, the more credibility that idea will have.

The potential downside, of course, is that the election is closer than I think and an even modest increase of Libertarian votes will swing the election to Myers.

A possibility I confess to not losing much sleep over.

Court 'Diversity' Is Overrated

(Sept. 21) — Complacent, entitled establishment's hair on fire, Part 1:

"We must replace Thurgood Marshall with another African American justice."

"Agreed. Meet Clarence Thomas."

"Aiiiii!"

Complacent, entitled establishment's hair on fire, Part 2:

"We must replace Ruth Bader Ginsburg with another female justice."

"Agreed. Meet Amy Comey Barrett."

"Aiiiii!"

I'm probably jumping the gun a little here. As I write, Barrett is said to be the front-runner on President Trump's short list of Supreme Court nominees. But anything can happen, and there are several good candidates on the list, including Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas. Don't count on him, though – in today's climate, it can't be anything but a woman for a woman, even for someone as scornful of political norms as Trump.

I just can't help it.

For one thing, it is a matter of parochial pride that a second Hoosier might be joining John Roberts on the bench.

For another, speculating on the possibility of Barrett can help us focus on the identity politics that are fracturing this nation into a horde of warring tribes.

Marshall and Thomas could not be more different in their views of the Constitution, one seeing it as a living document that must be interpreted through the lens of societal evolution, the other considering it an inflexible blueprint providing the boundaries for that evolution. But both bore the burden of bringing a "black" perspective to the court.

Ginsburg and Barrett are, presumably, also polar opposites when it comes to constitutional interpretation, and as a liberal Jew and a conservative Catholic, they have not exactly been on the same political-metaphysical page, either. But many see only the "woman's sensibilities" the court apparently can't do without.

That worldview certainly animated Justice Sonia Sotomayor, who once said in a pre-nomination speech that "as a wise Latina woman, with the richness of her experiences," she would "more often than not reach a better conclusion than a white male who hasn't lived that life." In nominating her, President Obama said he had considered "heart" and "empathy" to be prime qualifications for a court member.

But if a diversity of the human experience is a requirement for the court to have the proper empathetic perspective on the cases it considers, it fails on almost every count, not just when it comes to race and gender. Each member of the current court – every single one, including Ginsburg – attended either Yale or Harvard.

It's all nonsense anyway.

It shouldn't matter one little bit who the justices are. They could be the biggest hodgepodge of dissimilar characters ever assembled, or they could all be so indistinguishable that you couldn't pick one of them out of a lineup. What matters is the intellectual discipline they bring to the bench, how they interpret the law's fidelity to the Constitution and how committed they are to the nation's fundamental principles.

As a firm believer in individual rights as the essential bedrock that must undergird every other aspect of our jurisprudence, I am very much in the textualist (or originalist, if you prefer) school of constitutional interpretation in the way viewed by Thomas and, it is devoutly to be wished, Barrett.

I earlier wrote “presumably” about the Ginsburg-Barrett contrast because you never know about these nominations. Sometimes justices turn out the way presidents hope they will, and sometimes they don't.

Many of us in the judicially conservative camp had looked for Roberts to be a kindred spirit when President George W. Bush nominated him as chief justice, someone who would give the Constitution the care it deserved. But he seems determined to fill the swing-vote seat vacated by Anthony Kennedy. On any 4-4 vote, it is anyone's guess which way he will swing.

Which means those of us on the Indiana right have had our hair-on-fire moment, Part 1.

“Sure would be nice to have a sensible, deliberate Hoosier on the bench.”

“Agreed. Meet John Roberts.”

“Aiiiiii!”

Please let there not be a Part 2 with Barrett. She graduated from the law school of Notre Dame,

where she also taught for 15 years, so there is hope.

The Intangibility of the News

(Sept. 14) — I have wholeheartedly embraced the Kindle experience. It's been years since I read an actual bound-between-two covers, ink-on-paper book.

I like everything about e-reading, not the least of which is the sheer volume of material. I have downloaded more than 1,000 titles, and millions of others are but a click away. No more devoting an entire vacation suitcase to a few volumes of reading pleasure. I carry a library in my hip pocket.

But that puts me in a minority.

The decline of our analog reality has devastated bookstores just as it has eliminated so many department stores. But books are still as valued as the furniture and appliances people once left the house to shop for. Readers have just started buying them online.

According to the Association of American Publishers, books in all formats made almost \$26 billion in revenue in 2018 in the U.S., with print making up \$22.6 billion and e-books taking only \$2.04 billion. The COVID-19 pandemic has stopped the gradual erosion of e-book sales, but physical books still dominate in 2020.

I am in a peculiar position, in one way celebrating the digital revolution but in another way devastated by it.

Three years ago, I was still working on my retirement plan to die at my desk when disappearing subscribers and plummeting advertising revenues yanked my newspaper out from under me. It limped along for a brief time with a pathetic online presence but finally succumbed. The Fort Wayne News-Sentinel, which covered its community for 187 years, is gone.

As are about 2,000 newspapers that have died in the last 15 years. The number of newsroom employees has been cut in half since 2008, and circulation is down to barely 30 million from a

high of more than 63 million. Today, only about 24 percent of households get a newspaper, down from the peak of 74 percent.

It's something to ponder. Why is the rise of electronic publishing killing newspapers but not books?

I think it is, at least in part, because of our search for permanence in an ephemeral world.

We are acutely aware of the finite limits of our lives. We are here for a moment, then gone forever. That knowledge defines our existence.

So we hunger for that which endures, truths that were passed down to us to be added to and sent along to the next generation. We are desperate for assurance that the fire burning in the human heart leaves more behind than smoke in the wind.

Books represent our feeble attempts to grasp eternity, and their collection, in our public libraries and our personal shelves, displays a record of that journey. Gutenberg's revolution gave us the information to free ourselves of the ignorance imposed by knowledgeable authoritarians. We can seek our own interpretations of the Bible's truths or Shakespeare's wisdom. Those algebraic formulas in the math book will not succumb to the political whims of briefly ascendant lunatic fringes.

And our books have even helped us nurture our emotional pleasures into something more than of-the-moment diversions. I've read "Catch 22" half a dozen times and always laugh at something I missed on previous readings. And despite more readings of "Our Town" that I can remember, Emily's belated graveyard appreciation of life's ordinary pleasures still moves me to tears.

Newspapers, on the other hand, have always been meant to be disposable, a chronicle of fugitive joys and transitory crises.

When the moment passes, all our passions about it become nonsense. Today's headlines are tomorrow's footnotes. Go to the library and check out an old edition – not even from 10 or 5 years ago, but any front page from last year – and

consider how much of it that seemed so vital then is utterly irrelevant today.

And when the moment passes, it matters little how its story is disposed of – whether it is yellowing paper lining a bird cage, stacked in the attic or hauled to the recycle center, or digital blips that vanish into the shimmering ether of the Zeitgeist. News will still be what it always was, a fragile reminder of our own mortality.

But when we have made the final transition in the way news is distributed and consumed, I think something will have been lost.

People to this day obtain copies of photos of them published in the paper and keep them with the edition they were in. They make scrapbooks of clippings about their kids' high school sports exploits. They cut out and frame stories about the weddings, births and funerals in their families. Bookmarking a Facebook entry or mass emailing a favorable Tweet does not have quite the same feeling of adding to the permanent record of our lives.

We're still on the quest to capture something lasting from the fleeting moment. It's always been a difficult reach, and it will only get harder.

Zoeller and GOP Duality

(Sept. 7) — Hoosiers are, unfortunately, used to politicians who say one thing here and then become someone quite different out of town. They leave their three-piece suits in the condo when they visit home, donning jeans and plaid shirts while chatting with the common folk from the cabs of their shiny pickup trucks.

Still, we have to marvel at the boldness of former Indiana Attorney General Greg Zoeller, who not only takes such political dualism to a whole new level but doesn't even try to be sneaky about it. Indeed, he proclaims it proudly.

In an interview with South Bend Tribune columnist Jack Colwell recently, Zoeller describes himself as "still a former Republican" at the federal level because the national GOP has "wavered away from him" and is not likely "to return to the party" he joined anytime soon. But he still considers himself a Republican at the state

level because the GOP here has, “for the most part, provided positive leadership and results.”

And the reason for such agonizing inner conflict is, of course, President Donald Trump, who has created as much turmoil in his own political party as he has everywhere else.

It would be an understatement to say Zoeller is an anti-Trump Republican. He so detests the president that he plans to vote for Democrat Joe Biden as “the best alternative to restore some stability and credibility to the executive branch” and to facilitate the collaboration that can “begin to heal the divisions at home and abroad.”

Now, I understand some of that, but not nearly all of it.

I get it that Trump is an abrasive and confrontational figure who has turned conventional politics upside down. I know that many people become disenchanted with the political parties they start out with. I don’t doubt that someone would go so far as to vote for the other guy; I do remember Reagan Democrats, after all.

And I share Zoeller’s lament that the GOP nationally has strayed from the checks and balances and rights of states of the federal system so wisely crafted by the founders.

What I can’t fathom is why anti-Trump party members don’t seem to consider all the things that have been accomplished from their agenda during the president’s first term. And what possesses Zoeller to make him think Biden would do more for that agenda? I can’t make “conservative Republican” and “voting for Biden” compute, no matter how hard I try.

But I have to admire his solution for the dilemma.

Some might say Zoeller is merely infected with the pathological assertiveness of a reality-denying age. Whites can proclaim themselves to be black or Native Americans. Men can call themselves women, and either gender can say they are both genders or neither. Rioters and looters can claim “peaceful protest” status,

But Zoeller is much cleverer. He doesn’t feel confined to a binary choice, having to decide between being a Republican or not a Republican. He can be either one, depending on where he is. He just has to remember whether he has crossed the state line and which side of it he is on.

I am inspired.

As much fun as it is, I do occasionally get tired of being a curmudgeonly columnist – or, as one emailer kindly put it last week, “a bitchy old man” showing “complete stupidity” and making everything “about me, screw anyone else, me, me, me.”

It can be exhausting, but I don’t have to give it up altogether if I just make a trip across a state line now and then. I can go to Michigan, fire up a joint and vegetate for a week or over into Illinois and be an auxiliary gang member. I can slip into Kentucky and crack open a fifth or into Ohio and help topple a statue of Columbus.

And all the while, my secret self will be hidden away, ready to take out and deploy against unsuspecting readers, when I feel all rested and polished.

If I get good enough at the game, I might even end up in Washington. And it doesn’t matter who is serving as president or what the current governing philosophy is. I’m a columnist. I can be anti-anything.

COVID and a Timid Future

(Aug. 31) — Growing up, I had two things that shaped not only my childhood but much of my adult life as well: asthma and a protective mother.

I almost wrote “overprotective,” because that’s the attitude a restrained child adopts. But that would have been unfair to my mother and counter to the way the world works. It is the job of the parents to set limits and of the child to test them. So it has always been and always will be.

But I was restrained, more than most. Many of my early memories involve being stuck in the house, reading or writing or coloring in a book while my classmates roamed the great outdoors, having adventures and creating mischief.

I know that many people so sheltered rebel and go the other way when they grow up, living lives of reckless abandon, always taking the greater risk, regardless of how slight the reward might be.

I did not.

I absorbed my mother's careful wariness so deeply into my spirit that it became part of my character. I became a cautious person, always calculating the odds and flinching when they did not guarantee success. Looking back, my greatest regret in life is that I did not take more chances and so seldom pushed beyond my comfort zone to court failure in pursuit of grandeur.

I reveal this dissatisfaction so that readers might judge with some perspective what I'm going to say next about COVID-19 and the lockdown-in-lockstep response to it.

It might be that my background gives me a special insight into what has become a national panic attack. On the other hand, perhaps my experience has created a blind spot that makes my observations and conclusions suspect.

So, take this with however big a grain of salt you think you need and react accordingly.

It seems to me that we are creating and, I suspect, even nurturing a society full of excessive caution based on unreasonable fear. We are all letting ourselves be restrained in the house and hesitant to roam in search of adventure.

I saw a guy bicycling through the neighborhood the other day, his mask held tightly in place, and wondered what in the world he was thinking.

Was he unclear on the concept of virus and the fact that being by himself outdoors meant he had zero chance of either catching or transmitting anything?

Was he virtue signaling that he took our social-distancing instructions seriously and shame, shame on anyone who believed otherwise, perhaps in the process shouting a political statement across the partisan divide?

Or was he just a good little soldier following his orders as he understood them without ever really thinking about them?

Could have been any one of them, really, because they are all out there.

When I saw him, I had been on the way to the Post Office. When I got there, I stood in place with all the other masked-up patrons, as forlorn a bunch of people as I've ever seen. There was none of the usual idle chatting in line, the way people brought together by personal chores try to reach out to strangers in a casual way.

I had the same alone-together feeling a couple of days later on my regular trip to the supermarket. People listlessly pushed their carts around, avoiding eye contact and barely noticing whatever they were dropping into their carts. Not a drop of joy in the whole place.

We have been like a bunch of refugees, wandering through a post-apocalyptic wilderness in a desperate search for some semblance of normality, all of us pondering variations of the same lament: Will this ever end?

Perhaps not, we might think with every news broadcast we see.

There is the governor, once more extending the "final" stage of his economic re-entry plan. There he is – again – adding another four weeks to his mask mandate. There are the gin-up-the-dread controversies over the dumbest things. We must have vote by mail to acknowledge that those few minutes we spend at the polls might tip us into mass extinction. We must keep our classrooms shuttered despite the fact that children's chances of dying from the virus are virtually non-existent.

Before you patiently explain it to me, yes, I know that COVID-19 is communicable, passed human to human by close contact. I understand that the death count shows it is more dangerous than the seasonal flu and that it is prudent to take commonsense precautions.

But I also know other things.

The lockdowns were supposed to be temporary and not intended to beat the virus – a virus is a virus and will take the path that a virus takes – but to "flatten the curve" so as not to overwhelm the medical system. But temporary is becoming permanent, with the original rationale long discarded.

And I know, though it is seldom mentioned by the news readers breathlessly reporting the daily number of new cases as evidence of Armageddon, that the overwhelming majority of deaths are suffered by people over 65 with underlying conditions. Take them out of the equation, and the risk to the rest of the population is nowhere close to scary. Isolate and protect that vulnerable group, and the rest of the nation could go about its business.

There was no need, in other words, to destroy the economy to combat COVID-19 and add to our misery instead of alleviating it. We badly overreacted and continue to do so.

Which could have one of awful two long-term effects.

One of them, pronounced likely in libertarian and some conservative circles, is that when a deadlier virus comes along – and one will, do not doubt it – people will remember officials who cried wolf and ignore efforts to combat it. This is even more possible given how many leaders are squandering the public trust by ignoring and sometimes even condoning organized violence in our biggest cities.

There will be what amounts to the anarchy of a universal “Atlas Shrugged” moment. It will be the equivalent of the rebellious life of wild abandon in my childhood-of-restraint analogy.

But I fear (get out that grain of salt) the opposite, that our society will absorb the current careful wariness so deeply into its spirit that it becomes part of the national character. We will be forever a cautious people, with zero tolerance for risk, always calculating the odds and afraid to take a chance.

This will no longer be the country we thought we knew. People will be reduced to lives of quiet regret and resentment, and the petty tyrants will rule.

Get Ready for Drive-in Mania

(Aug. 24) — I love my car. Not driving it. I am one of life’s designated passengers. Driving is somewhere between tedious and terrifying on the annoyance scale. It is impossible to stop fixating

on the destination and simply enjoy the journey. There are too many details to attend to, and I can never forget that there are other drivers out there trying to kill me.

But I love being in my car, once it has delivered me uneventfully to the finish line. It is my safe space, my man cave on wheels. It has my scent and my clutter. It keeps me warm on the coldest night and cool on the hottest day. I can play whatever I’m in the mood for on the radio, as loudly as I want.

I like to just sit in the car and look – Lake Michigan was a favorite sight through the windshield when I lived in that part of the state. Sometimes, I go out for a burger and fries, take them home and eat them in the driveway, watching the rabbits nibble in the backyard. For a couple of seasons there was a small groundhog family I named the Waltons – Ma, Pa and Lawn Boy.

The drive-in was created for people like me. We could enjoy big-screen entertainment with the camaraderie of a shared experience without actually having to mingle with the riffraff.

I can mark the passage of my life with the drive-in.

There was the trip with my parents for some long, boring drama. There were no fights or car chases to properly wire the 10-year-old brain, just talk, talk, talk, and I fell asleep in the back seat.

There was the high school outing for a beach movie I could not name with a girl I should not. I won’t bore you with the full baseball analogy – it is enough to say that when I walked her to her front door, I was thrown out of the game.

There was the time in Texas when three other soldiers and I got sloshed on Bali Hai, surely the worst of the worst of cheap wines, while watching “Night of the Living Dead” (the black & white one in which – SPOILER ALERT – the hero is mistaken for a zombie and killed at the end). We decided it was a metaphor for the state of the country, but that was probably the wine.

Ah, warm memories of a life well-led.

Sadly, before I could fully immerse myself in the drive-in milieu, they were on the way out. The

post-war car culture spawned 4,000 screens and the “summer movie” concept in the 1950s, but smaller, more uncomfortable cars and the VCR in the 1970s started turning drive-ins into shopping centers and apartment complexes. “Jaws” in 1975 was the last true summer drive-in blockbuster, and today there are barely 500 screens left.

But I may have another chance, and a lot of others might join me.

Along comes the COVID-19 quarantine, and drive-ins are suddenly an attractive option for people desperate to get out of the house. Pop-ups are, well, popping up everywhere, from the Miami Dolphins stadium to a diner in Queens. And Walmart will sponsor drive-ins at hundreds of its parking lots. All that’s needed are inflatable screens for the picture and FM radio stations for the sound.

And more than movies are being offered. Comedian Jim Gaffigan did a drive-in show for 1,000 cars full in New Jersey. Country star Garth Brooks filmed a concert and showed it on 300 screens for \$100 a car. (I wonder if the fans flashed their headlights for favorite songs the way we used to flick our lighters for them.)

I can see drive-ins playing a much bigger part of the look-but-don’t-touch, put-your-damn-mask-on, fraidy-cat future the virus warriors have in mind for us. There is almost no limit to what we can experience from our socially distanced automotive bubbles.

High school graduations. Church services. Weddings and funerals. Rummage sales. Traveling Broadway shows. Circuses. Even major sporting events. Many stadiums already have the giant screens. All they need do is tear down the stands and replace them with multi-acre parking lots. Fans could do a version of the wave by raising and lowering their hoods in sequence, properly masked while outside their cars of, of course.

The drive-in might even become the center of our civic life.

I can imagine Governor Holcomb, speaking from a stage at the previously derelict State Fair Grounds, his words beamed to cars parked before

hundreds of screens throughout the state, declaring that he will end racism for all time by pulling Affirmative Action out of the 1960s dustbin, renaming it “Equity and Inclusion” and decreeing that any evil not immediately eradicated will be deemed systemic and thoroughly deplored.

He shouldn’t do such things on warm summer nights, however, lest people start shouting from their cars, “Get out of the water, shark, shark!” or “Walk away faster, zombies, zombies!”

And what about the presidential election? Candidates used to have whistle-stop campaigns – now they can have drive-in campaigns, big screens behind the contenders as they speak. Joe Biden’s could translate his garble into standard English. President Trump’s could show his tweets complaining about his own speech.

If this is handled properly, the whole country could be like one giant parking lot. We could leave the bubble of our homes, stay safe in the bubbles of our cars, just pull into whichever drive-in that had what we wanted.

Cars would become important status symbols again, as they should be. But where once they stood for Americans’ rugged individualism, love of freedom and urge to explore, they would stand for our demand for safety and security, our fear of standing out in the crowd, our passive willingness to follow the leader.

We will have matured from a people always on the move to a people who have found their destination and claimed their parking spaces, looking through the windshields and waiting to be amused.

A Time to Wax Philosophic

(Aug. 17) — Here’s a thought for the day: The planet is a hot mess right now because of the indefensible stupidity of the politicians and professors, journalists and generals and preachers, administrators and artists, in fact the entire leadership class to whom we have entrusted our fragile civilization.

So, let’s give the philosophers a chance. What have we got to lose?

That line of thought got started a few days ago when I tried unsuccessfully to care about the tiresome negotiations over whether the latest federal bailout should be \$1 trillion or \$2 trillion, a bailout required because those debating it were the very same people who deliberately crashed the economy they are now trying to fix.

Then I read about Gov. Eric Holcomb and other Indiana pooh bahs vowing to move heaven and earth to ensure that public education gets full funding despite the fact that teacher union flaks and public health functionaries are doing everything they can to keep actual classroom instruction to a bare minimum.

All these people, I concluded, federal and state alike, are like curious but backward children who take their toys apart then start pitching a fit because they can't figure out how the pieces go back together.

About the same time, my Indiana Policy Review colleague Craig and I were talking about books we might suggest for people seeking a little common sense in an insane world. My chief contribution was to recommend the works of Will Durant, that prolific and most eloquent historian.

That made me nostalgic for the spirited debates of my college years, when bold and even lunatic ideas could be tossed about with impunity, and for the dense, cryptic tomes that provided our fodder. Yes, heaven help me, I read Hesse and Sartre and Camus and discussed them with pompous glee, though today I couldn't tell you a single thing about any of them.

I considered dragging out my set of "The Story of Civilization," started by Durant and finished with his wife, Ariel, as collaborator, but that thing is nearly 14,000 pages long, and my attention span isn't what it used to be. So, I pulled down the much shorter but still insightful "The Story of Philosophy" on my Kindle.

And rediscovered, in the very first chapter, on Plato, an interesting bit of historical context some might find useful today.

From 490-470 B.S., Durant writes, Sparta and Athens forgot their jealousies and joined forces to battle the Persians seeking to turn Greece into a

colony of its Asian empire. Sparta provided the army and Athens the navy.

The war over with the Persians thwarted, Sparta demobilized its troops "and suffered the economic disturbances natural to that process; while Athens turned her navy into a merchant fleet, and became one of the greatest trading cities of the ancient world."

Sparta relapsed into agricultural seclusion and stagnation, "while Athens became a busy mart and port, the meeting place of many races of men and of diverse cults and customs, whose contact and rivalry begat comparisons, analysis and thought."

Traditions and dogmas began to wear down, mathematics grew and science developed, and the "growth of wealth brought the leisure and security which are the prerequisites of research and speculation" and people "took all knowledge for their province and sought ever wider studies." Magic and ritual "slowly gave way to science and control, and philosophy began."

So, with commerce there is prosperity and the march of civilization; without it, stagnation. A simple lesson from nearly 2,500 years ago we could wish our lockdown overlords had given a passing thought to.

The philosophers have been giving us ideas ever since, which have been chewed over endlessly by other philosophers and ignored by everybody else. A pity.

Philosophy, should the subject be of more than mild interest to you, has five disciplines.

The human race has been and forever be will be stuck in one of them – politics, which is in theory is a search for how best to govern ourselves but in practice is merely a study in power without moral considerations, who has it and who wants it. Read the headlines on any day and tell me I'm wrong.

We might improve our practice of that discipline if we spent more effort exploring the other four: logic, which guides us in arguing our passions; aesthetics, which helps us separate the gold from the dross and hear the music in the noise; ethics, which can show us how to treat each other with decency; and metaphysics, which

ponders our connection to the mysteries of eternity and infinity.

Perhaps we should have a philosopher in residence for every seat of power from the smallest council chamber to the halls of Congress, skeptics who can advise our tinkerers-with-toys that they don't know everything and should stop pretending that they do.

People forget that about Socrates, the teacher of Plato and arguably the seminal figure in philosophy. The Socratic method was not about pounding wisdom into followers, but about removing the false certainty of unexamined dogmas, not about answers but always moving on to deeper questions with clearer thinking.

"One thing only I know, and that is that I know nothing," he said. Doubt is the first step on the road to wisdom.

Which is the thought for the day, but perhaps not this day. Not too many out there willing to admit what they do not know, I suspect.

Kindness Is Always an Option

(Aug. 10) — A reader commenting on my column about nimrods from Podunk emailed that he appreciates a little context with his news, "a concept that seems to be an endangered species."

Numbers are just numbers, he wrote. "Data should always be presented in context. Context can make the difference between truth/fact and honesty."

Anecdotes offered as proof of an argument could also use a little context to bridge the fact-to-honesty gap.

I was thinking about two women I have known, and the gut-wrenching decisions they had to make about the men they loved.

One was married to a favorite relative of mine. They had a long, happy marriage and lived a quiet, ordinary life in the Midwest, with the job, the children, the house in the suburbs.

My relative was, though it sounds quaint today, a sweet man, quick to laugh, slow to anger, always on an even keel.

But then dementia stalked and eventually claimed him. As he deteriorated, he was by turns surly and bitter, becoming at the end a mean man who made everyone in his life utterly miserable.

That gave his wife a life crisis: Stick with him, or walk away?

The same crisis was faced by a younger woman, who had gotten engaged before she came to work at the newspaper in Indiana that employed me. Shortly after the engagement, her exercise-conscious fiancé had some kind of accident with barbells.

I never got the details, but the short version was that his oxygen was cut off for a significant amount of time. He survived, but with a different personality and far fewer IQ points.

Stick with him, or walk away?

As it turned out, each woman made a different choice. My relative's wife decided to stick with her man. The young woman in my office decided to walk away.

If I had just heard those stories without the background, the way we are presented so much news today, I could be expected to say, well, there is a way one is supposed to behave when a significant other changes, so one woman was right and one was wrong.

But I did know the backgrounds. I knew that my relative's wife had spent a lifetime with her husband and, through the meanness, see the person he used to be and choose to remember that and honor it. And I knew my colleague was facing a lifetime with someone who had become a stranger, nothing like the person she had fallen in love with.

Because I knew the context, I could not say I disagreed with either decision. There were no hard-and-fast rules of life in play, just a struggle toward the least objectionable of bad choices.

Robin Williams once said something that has stuck with me. On first hearing, it sounded wise, in a superficial way, but it took on the poignancy of a tough self-examination when we later learned how tortured his mind was.

“Everyone you meet,” he said, “is fighting a battle you know nothing about.”

He added a coda that I would not have: “Be kind. Always,” I might have said something like, “Take a breath. Think about it.” Sometimes, even when you know people’s battles, you are forced to conclude that they still might be jerks. From “take a breath” to “still a jerk” seems a much easier trip to me than from “be kind” to “still a jerk.”

But I appreciate the wisdom of trying to put someone’s words and deeds into a broader perspective, striving for empathy, looking for context.

In so many ways today, we live in a world without context.

We are presented with dire either-or choices (what logicians call bifurcation or a false dichotomy) and told we must pick one or the other. A choice between killing the economy or risking widespread death, between wokeness and racism, between Trump and Never Trump, past sins and current sensibilities, law-and-order and oppression, liberty and license.

There are times when we must recognize clear, bright lines, between right and wrong, good and evil, even productive and wasteful. But there are times when the question isn’t whether there is a line but where to put it. In our own lives, we seek a balance between self-interest and our duty to others. In our greater society, the eternal goal is to balance liberty and equality.

When to draw a line and when to move it. I think it takes a lifetime and then some to work that out, but it’s the worthiest of struggles.

From Podunk to Nimrod

(*Aug. 3*) — Sooner or later, every political columnist quotes George Santayana, and this is my week. If you have a problem with that, then go back to Podunk with the other nimrods.

That was probably a bad way to begin. Some readers might take offense.

Let me start over.

“Podunk” was a common insult when I was growing up, and it generally meant a dull,

insignificant place, a cultural backwater where nothing ever happened. People from New York said it of Indianapolis, people in Indianapolis said it of Fort Wayne, Fort Wayne residents said it of Lima, Ohio. Like that.

I discovered later in life that there are several towns and a few regions around the country actually called Podunk, and that the word is of Algonquian origin and denoted both a people and their winter village in what is now Connecticut.

In today’s climate, when we are being shamed into removing all references to indigenous people from the public consciousness, it’s a word we probably shouldn’t even think, let alone write.

Another bad start, so let’s try again.

I suppose we can still say “nimrod.” That was another common insult from my youth, and it meant a stupid jerk, especially one with a Barney Fife attitude, a dimwit going through life full of empty boasts.

I later learned — I seem to do that a lot — that the word comes from a king mentioned in the Bible as “a mighty warrior on the earth and a mighty hunter before the Lord.” Extra-biblical sources link him to the tower of Babel, which its builders foolishly thought could reach all the way to heaven. Such effrontery offended God, who decided that people would no longer have a common tongue but start speaking in different languages, forever after unable to understand each other.

That makes for a wonderful metaphor about the state of the world today, but, come to think of it, tends to extol Christianity, which some might see as a denigration of other religions.

So, never mind.

Maybe I should have started with my main premise, which is that people have different breaking points. In today’s insanity, with chaos crowding out rationality on every front, there comes an event that causes the ordinary person to finally say, “Enough! Reset to normal right now.”

For some, it was when the toppling of Confederate statues morphed into attempts to stigmatize all of America’s founders. For others, it was when so-called pandemic scientists said it was

perfectly OK to mass in the streets for social justice but the rest of us should continue to stay inside.

For my sister, it was when the Twitter mob came for Vice President Pence's older brother Greg for having "racist antiques" at his mall in Edinburgh, a Podunk tiny community around Indianapolis. She happens to be an antiquer, and Pence's place is one of her favorites, being clean and neat and climate controlled, with scores of dealers in a building big enough to have its own ZIP Code.

"It's an antique mall, for God's sake," she railed. "That means the past, including the Jim Crow era. What do they want to do, erase all of history?"

Well, yeah, sort of.

They found my breaking point when the mob came for Warner Brothers, crowing in victory when it was decided to take away the guns from Yosemite Sam and Elmer Fudd, allowing Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck to keep tearing through the cartoon universe unchallenged, mayhem and destruction in their wake.

I thought about writing a column to eulogize the passing of Yosemite, one of my childhood heroes. Funny hat, big mustache, waving his guns around and yelling about varmints – I could name several of my uncles in Kentucky he reminded me of.

But, you know, old, white guy with a gun. Not a good role model these days.

Then my research uncovered – I later learned – an interesting tidbit from those old cartoons. Both Bugs and Daffy referred to Elmer Fudd as a "nimrod" – someone who thought of himself as a mighty hunter but was, in fact, a silly, little pipsqueak.

How sly and clever of those subversive cartoon creators. How wonderfully intricate the way history wanders off and meanders and then circles in on itself.

Oh, that reminds me that I was going to throw a Santayana quote at you. I almost – heh, heh – forgot.

He famously said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." That's been misquoted in a hundred ways and wrongly attributed to many other historical figures, most notably Winston Churchill.

But what's interesting about that sentence is that is just a part of a longer thought that no one ever quotes.

So, a little context:

"Progress, far from consisting in change, depends on retentiveness. When change is absolute there remains no being to improve and no direction is set for possible improvement: and when experience is not retained, as among savages, infancy is perpetual. Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

Santayana was not saying merely that ignoring history could cause us to keep making the same mistakes. He was saying that knowledge is cumulative, that if we forget the baby steps that got us here, we can never master the baby steps that will take us forward.

In other words, if we destroy the past, we destroy the future.

But I repeat myself, nimrod that I am.

Governing 'Emergencies'

(July 27) – Early in my stint on the News-Sentinel's editorial board, county officials came to lobby for the newspaper's support of a proposed new tax.

They knew we had a conservative editorial page, so they gave us their best sound arguments based on fiscal prudence.

The impact on individuals would be minimal – a "dining out" tax of a mere 1 percent on food and beverages. The use of the revenue would be strictly targeted – going to fund a reconstruction project of the War Memorial Coliseum, at the time the county's main entertainment complex. Best of all, the tax would not be permanent. When the coliseum project was finished, the tax would end.

After much discussion, members of the editorial board reluctantly agreed to endorse the food-and-beverage tax.

And guess what?

The project ended, but the county decided to build itself a minor league baseball stadium, and there was that shiny tax, still collecting money. Naturally, they used it for the new project. Some years later, that stadium was demolished, before it was even paid for, so the city could build a brand-new stadium with a whole new tax scheme.

And more than 30 years later, diners in our county are still paying a food-and-beverage tax, and probably will be until the revenue is tapped to fund a public transit shuttle to the Mars colony. That was the last tax I ever supported.

It brought home a lesson about government we should never forget: Inertia works both ways.

We all remember that a body at rest tends to stay at rest, but forget the part about a body in motion tending to stay in motion. The next time we complain about a gridlocked government not getting anything done, we should remind ourselves we probably won't like it if they finally do something, and the less we like it the greater the chance it will never stop.

Government is forever.

Unfair taxes don't go away. Pointless laws stay on the books. Contingency plans somehow become public policy with no debate or official notice.

And power, once it has been wielded by hall monitors turned elected officials, does not wither away and die. It turns out that hall monitors live to tell people where and when they may and may not go.

It's hard to say which was more appalling about Gov. Eric Holcomb's announced mandate of a state mask policy to fight a new spike in COVID-19 cases: his plan to declare, on his own authority, that disobedience would be a misdemeanor carrying a potential penalty of \$1,000 in fines and 180 days in jail, or his simultaneous announcement that, well, the penalties would not be enforced.

In one breathtaking act of hubris, he would have imposed an unconstitutional edict and added another layer of cynicism for people who already thought the law was more a whim of the privileged than a reasonable rulebook for society.

But happily for us, he apparently listened to the widespread complaints, including many from fellow Republican officeholders, and dropped the idea that an executive can create laws instead of merely enforcing them. The mandate will now be "educational," not a criminalized offense.

Or perhaps he listened to outgoing Attorney General Curtis Hill, who left us with a parting word of common sense: It is one thing for the governor to declare an emergency and take arbitrary action. In's another to keep acting unilaterally, without calling the General Assembly into special session, long past the time when urgency was called for. "Emergencies" do not last for months on end.

However, he ignored the part about a special legislative session. He is still out there, a Capt. Jean-Luc Picard madly directing the United Federation Starship Indiana into unknown galaxies by flicking his wrist and commanding his underlings to "Make it so."

The issue is not how deadly COVID-19 is or whether things like masks and social distancing are appropriate responses to it. The issue is whether the government can and will deal with a perceived crisis within a system designed to protect the best interests of all citizens.

Speaking of emergencies, it has just been reported that state government will soon face a budget crisis. It seems that crashing an economy and putting millions of Hoosiers in a financial hole will necessarily mean a drastic decrease in funding for state government.

There has been a 23 percent drop in state revenues, which has decreased the state's \$2.3 billion in reserves by \$850 million. There is the prospect of drastic cutbacks in government spending, massive layoffs, reduction or elimination of certain services.

Cutting back on waste, fraud and abuse? Always has been and always will be a pipe dream.

So, any day now, expect hints about the need for additional revenues, and we all know what that means.

To which there is only one reasonable response from the beleaguered taxpaying public. Well, yeah, we'll get back to you on that. ♦

Mark Franke

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Thoughts on How the Devout Might Vote

(Sept. 30) — I enjoy the intellectual stimulation I get from conversing with those with different perspectives and experiences from my own. One such group is a half dozen or so Roman Catholics who tolerate my Lutheran heresy once each month at our regular breakfast meetings. It must be their concept of affirmative action while I view it as mission work.

The discussion is wide ranging, usually involving a theological issue or two. I guess it is a sign of the times but the talk always reverts to the national political mess. While we are all politically conservative, there are distinctions to be drawn on most any issue.

Yet we all have political opinions informed by our Christian faith which makes it difficult if not impossible to separate these in some kind of ideological clean room. But why would we want to, which brings me to the question on the table last week: Should Christians make voting decisions based on their faith's teaching on moral issues?

This question is getting a lot of media attention now as Joe Biden, a Roman Catholic, is trying to appeal to the important Catholic voting block while opposing his church's teaching on human life issues such as abortion. I don't envy his navigation of that minefield, especially after being refused the Eucharist at a South Carolina church last fall. Fellow Catholic Nancy Pelosi has mired herself in the same swamp.

The debate has been fueled, some would say exacerbated, by recent comments from a Wisconsin priest, James Altman, who publicly exhorted Catholics to vote their faith on the abortion issue. This means, of course, that nearly

all Democrats are *nolo contendere* since that party has made it clear it is not open to pro-life candidates. Fr. Altman showed no reticence in pointing this out, a sin the left and its media cheerleaders won't hesitate to pounce on as a violation of the separation of church and state doctrine once they realize the effect he is having on Catholic voters. Apparently, religious people must check their freedom of speech at the front door, as if the First Amendment should be viewed as "choose just one option from the menu."

My church body, the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, is every bit as pro-life as the Roman Catholics, so this political calculus affects me equally. We, my church leadership and many of us faithful in the pews, speak out on what we consider the essential moral issues of our day. Life issues such as abortion and euthanasia top this list, and recent challenges to First Amendment freedom of religion has risen to demand the same attention.

Yet our pastors do not use the pulpit to support or oppose specific candidates. Our weekly Prayer of the Church includes intercessions for the president and all elected officials, regardless of who they are. We are compelled by the Fourth Commandment to honor our leaders and we do, officially at least.

That does not constrain us at the ballot box, however. Lutheran congregations are highly democratic in polity, with the voting membership making the key decisions including electing our own pastors. Voting is a duty, both within our congregational assembly and in the public sphere.

Hence the question posited above: Should Christians vote their faith? The same question could be asked Jews, Muslims and other faithful in America's polyglot democracy.

I don't doubt for a New York minute that more liberal fellowships are stressing progressive ideals and their political implications this November, those implications being that Donald Trump and the Republicans must be stopped.

The answer to the question is obvious: Of course one should vote his conscience, which, for Christians and others of faith, requires certain

political issues to default to moral imperatives. For those of us who believe pre-born babies are human lives and not a matter of their mothers' property rights, no economic or foreign-policy issue can rise above this.

If one is devout in his faith, then the normal political stratifications should not apply. It doesn't matter how your demographic is supposed to think as determined by conventional progressive wisdom. It is your personal vote in the privacy of the booth and, in spite of what the identity-politics herd wishes to believe, you are not bound to a pre-ordained behavior.

If certain issues are of utmost importance to you, then vote for the candidates who align with your conscience on those issues. That is the fundamental duty of enlightened citizenship in a representative democracy.

What Is Democracy Anyway?

(Sept. 23) — Having spent Constitution Day on Sept. 17 talking about it to anyone who would listen, I realized that it (the Constitution) bears more reflection on my part. But first, a digression.

I was in the dean of students office at a local seminary when a Nigerian student came in and asked if he could have a copy of the U.S. Constitution. The dean's assistant pointed to a display in the office. He then asked if he could take extras and was told to help himself. I guess the school wasn't worried about running out due to citizenry demand.

Between the masks we were all wearing and my age-invoked hearing deficiency, I couldn't quite follow everything this young man said but I did pick up that he wanted to compare our constitution to his. He was proud that Nigeria has birthright citizenship copied from America and its federal structure mirrors ours. Here is another example of America's being that "city on a hill" which others admire and try to emulate.

I wish I could have spent the rest of the afternoon learning about his notion of democracy and the importance of founding documents such as a constitution. And asking what aspects of American democracy he would like to inject into

Nigeria's. And, for that matter, what he believed we Americans could learn from his country.

Alas, he had to leave for a class which takes me back to my reflective state.

Is America a true democracy? She is not a pure democracy in the textbook sense in that the people don't decide everything themselves. That may still work in small New England towns — at least I hope it does — but even with the internet there is no way to have 330 million or so of our fellow citizens voting on everything. That might even surpass Congress' propensity for legislative gridlock.

Rather, our Founding Fathers created a republic or what might be termed a representative democracy. We get to vote on who gets to vote on issues. Back in the day when Congress was only in session part-time, as is still the case with Indiana's General Assembly and all our city councils, this worked well enough as representatives spent most of the year living among and conversing with their constituents.

This seems to me so much better a system than one inhabited by full-time professional politicians who spend most of their time cocooned in the Beltway with well-expensed lobbyists and elitist media types.

This system, no matter how imperfect and dysfunctional it can be at times, will only work if we the voters act as democrats (small "d"). That means understanding the rules of the game and playing by them once the whistle blows. Here is where our democracy may be going off the rails.

Voting in a democratic society means that someone wins and someone loses. Nearly all losers graciously concede and most go into loyal opposition, no doubt plotting revenge at future elections while parlaying their minority status into legislative bargaining power in the present.

Even Richard Nixon, considered by many to be the most amoral of our presidents, conceded to John Kennedy in 1960 in spite of substantial evidence of voter fraud in Mayor Daily's Chicago and the state of Texas, perhaps enough to swing the election. This compares Nixon favorably to Al

Gore, but there may be something much worse in the offing.

Hilary Clinton (remember her?) has publicly counseled Joe Biden not to concede the election “under any circumstances.” Presumably “any circumstance” includes a resounding loss by Biden on Nov. 3. It certainly includes the scenario in which armies of lawyers challenge ballot counting in key districts that Mrs. Clinton assumes by divine right should report more Biden votes than local election officials see fit to certify. Does it also include sending mobs back into the streets for “mostly peaceful” protests that involve looting, burning and killing? As much as I dislike Mrs. Clinton’s character and ideology, I can’t bring myself to believe she really wants that to happen. So why heat up the rhetoric?

Democracy won’t, can’t, work unless both winners and losers accept the will of the voters as determined by a simple, first past the post count. Losers denouncing the results and declaring the winner illegitimate aren’t simply acting as spoiled two-year olds throwing temper tantrums. They are subverting the democratic process and to what end? Short term power at whatever cost? Would they sacrifice our democracy on the altar of power? When they refuse to accept the will of the voters, their insincere commitment to democracy and our Constitution is exposed for what it is. Too many nations over the course of human history have suffered the death of their democratic institutions at the hands of mobocracy, starting with classical Athens where democratic government was incubated.

My nightmare is that we haven’t learned from history and therefore will repeat it to our hurt as the philosopher Santayana warned. My hope is that this, like all nightmares, is only a bad dream which disappears at break of day. I can’t wake up soon enough.

The Virtue of Moderation

(Sept. 9) — I never know whether to laugh or cry after reading a summary of news headlines from my Internet feed. Take one from last week as

an example. The mayor of Washington D.C. decided that 78 city streets must be renamed because their historical namesakes were “persons of concern.” She doubled down by suggesting that the Washington and Jefferson memorials be torn down or repurposed.

Is there some kind of extremist contest under way that gives a prize to the most nihilistic demand made? What is in store from the next eager contestant?

History instructs us that revolutionary movements like today’s Cancel Culture have a preordained ending, an eschatology of total destruction of its target and eventually of itself. One need only to think back to the French Revolution as it spiraled downward from a constitutional monarchy to a parliamentary democracy and then to the guillotine. Robespierre’s “Madame Guillotine” also took him in the end.

One French historian of the period wrote, and I paraphrase, that revolutions devour their own young. No matter how much pride you take in your own extremist credentials, someone even more extreme is waiting in the wings to denounce you, as most of the early radicals of the French Revolution learned to their hurt.

Perhaps that is where our hope lies. As each successive wave of accelerating extremism and intolerance breaks, more of us are wrenched out of our complacency. Where is the tipping point, where enough is enough? Must the D.C. mayor succeed in her quest to obliterate that iconic monument to the father of our country before middle America rises up?

Can middle America rise to the challenge? Or have we become ossified in our own conceits such that we are blind to what needs to be done?

Consider this: When was the last time you had a rational discussion about a controversial issue? It is almost impossible these days, even among people who are in general agreement. Nothing is nuanced, nothing bears fuller examination. We are reduced to being automatons, marching to someone else’s drum. It seems the purpose of conversation these days is to

make a point, which is not the same thing as convincing others.

What I believe we have lost is the virtue of moderation. I'm thinking here of something I learned 50 years ago as an undergraduate in a political philosophy class. It was Plato who defined moderation as a virtue of the soul, one that produces harmony among reason, spirit and desire.

Let me be clear that I am not speaking here of a middle of the road wishy-washiness born from incoherent ideology or fixation on the next opinion poll. In a representative democracy those people have their usefulness at times but don't count me as one of them. And I'm certainly not referring to what the New York Times called "pragmatic moderation" in its cheerleading for Kamala Harris as the putative vice president.

Rather, the virtue of moderation is an ability to school one's perspective to avoid the temptation to give way to passion, one of the greatest dangers to Plato's ordered mind. Few of us seem capable of that these days as we are more likely to rush to claim moral superiority, self-assigned of course. Feigning outrage ought to be an Olympic sport.

So what is a moderate in this classical sense? Here's my definition: Someone who listens more than speaks; someone who thinks more than talks; someone who reads before deciding; someone who respects the great minds that went before. How many of those people do you know?

If we are to escape from what the poet William Blake described as "endless night," it will take heroic effort on the part of people of good will and their rededication to the lofty principles enshrined in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Are any to be found? I suppose I should ask Diogenes, the cynic, if I can borrow his lantern to look for one.

Ballot Harvesting

(Sept. 2) — One needs a sense of irony to read the news headlines these days. Or maybe a suspension of disbelief.

I have been trying, unsuccessfully, to follow the debate over voting issues in the upcoming election. Here's my take:

The Democrats are convinced Donald Trump will order the Post Office to slow down delivery of mailed-in ballots, but apparently only in Democrat strongholds and thereby stealing the election.

The Republicans are equally convinced the Democrats will perpetrate massive voter fraud through illegal paper ballots, thereby stealing the election.

So it is a given that the election is going to be stolen but we get our choice as to which party will be the thief. Do the political and media elites really believe this? Probably they do. They have incarcerated themselves in an echo chamber of self-validation.

Will the Post Office struggle if 150 million paper ballots are mailed out to every eligible voter and then more than half of them, based on past voter turnout, are returned by first class mail? No doubt it will. Just look at what happens to the delivery infrastructure each December.

USPS has been bleeding red for years as it operates under antiquated rules and the curse of partisan congressional oversight. What would any other business which is losing billions of dollars annually do in that situation? Cut costs, for starters, look for efficiencies and focus on priority services. The USPS has been trying to do this over the past several years but suddenly these operational improvements are part of a conspiracy to affect the election's outcome. Rational management does not a conspiracy make.

On the other hand, Republicans believe they have reason to fear massive vote-by-mail fraud. The Heritage Foundation database has over 1,000 proven cases of voter fraud logged, most with criminal convictions. Indiana's entries in the list typically involve absentee ballot malfeasance. Here in Indiana, one can vote by mail by requesting an absentee ballot.

If Republicans have a voter fraud focus, it should be on ballot harvesting. Originally designed to allow family members to assist less-

able voters as a convenience, it can serve as an effective “get out the vote” tool. But one must wonder about its susceptibility to misuse. Orange County in California has been a perennial Republican stronghold yet every one of its congressional seats was won by the Democrats in 2018. Typical mid-term losses for the incumbent party? Perhaps, but that county received a quarter million harvested ballots, some being returned in batches of 100 or more. Curiouser and curiouser, to quote Alice of Wonderland fame.

Behind all these schemes is an underlying principle that citizens in a democracy should vote. At risk of being burned at the stake for heresy, I ask why? My objection rests on two premises, one philosophical and the other practical.

If America is the land of the free, based on classical liberal principles of natural rights, shouldn't one have the right to vote or not? How can voting be a freedom if it is played as a requirement of citizenship? If I am told I must vote, how free can I be?

The practical aspect of this is even more critical to our democracy. If I don't care who wins or if I am too subsumed in other things in my life to research and analyze candidates, how is my vote helpful? Do we want uninformed, uncaring citizens making decisions like who should be the next president?

Perhaps there is something devious in this drive to “force” everyone to vote. Where would one expect to find pockets of large numbers of otherwise disinterested residents needing persuasion to vote? Where are the political machines most effective? Tammany Hall and Mayor Dailey would have found this tool quite handy in the iron-fisted control of their cities.

The Post Office has enough problems of its own and Congress' making without being set up as the fall guy if Donald Trump is reelected. And our democracy absolutely requires that citizens have easy access to ballots, assuming they really want to cast their vote. Reasonable safeguards can be and have been put in place to protect the integrity of our elections. Effective, at least until

overzealous federal judges interject themselves at the 11th hour.

Democracy isn't meant to be effort free, but much of today's foment is nothing more than self-inflicted pain. Could our deteriorating American ethos be attributable to the retrenchment in formal civics instruction in our public schools? One wonders.

When asked which is the greater threat to our country, ignorance or apathy, one was responded, “I don't know and I don't care.” Pathetic? Or just one citizen exercising his freedom to live his life according to his own priorities? Where is the nobility in compelling such a person to vote? It certainly can't advance the cause of good government which is why the right to vote is fundamental to our liberty when used by an informed citizenry.

‘Conventional’ Thinking

(Aug. 26) — I gave up watching political conventions decades ago. The never-ending primary season ruined for me the suspense and excitement of the convention floor voting. “The proud state of Ruritania casts 12 votes for her favorite son . . .” Once all the states got through the first ballot, the smoke-filled back rooms kicked into gear and trades were made.

In those days delegates were bound for the first ballot only and then could work the best deal for their state. The vice president pick was usually unknown until late in the convention unless he were an incumbent. And almost always he was chosen to geographically balance the ticket and to help carry battleground states.

There was even drama in advance of the convention as competing state delegations fought it out before the credentials committee. Which delegation to seat also involved wheeling and dealing, a preliminary test of the support for the leading candidates.

Platforms used to matter, as these were written to unify the disparate wings of the party and the special interests, such as they were back then.

The entire production had one goal — to bring forth a ticket and a platform which would appeal

to enough voters to win a majority in the Electoral College.

It's been all downhill since then. Now, low primary turnout and a horde of candidates in the early states are seen as opportunities to rally special-interest groups and the extreme wing of the party. Candidates must appeal to a primary voting plurality only rather than to a general election majority.

Sadly, primary voters don't reward thoughtful statements. Perhaps we are driven by a media of our own creation, one that panders rather than informs. Just compare the current political commentary programs with William F. Buckley's *Firing Line* of the 1960's. Buckley's erudite, considered and respectful approach to his topic and guest wouldn't get the ratings today.

The only potential excitement anymore is the announcement of the presumptive nominee's choice for vice president. Given the insidious political bias and Trump hatred in the national media, I probably should not have been surprised that Kamala Harris, Joe Biden's VP choice, has been hailed by many of them as a moderate. Moderate compared to whom?

Before going further, I'm going to have to look up the word. I apparently don't know what "moderate" means anymore. A short search of the internet brought up ideological and nonpartisan organizations which track senators' voting records either to provide information to the general public or to rally its members in support of — or opposition to — a specific senator. (A word of caution here: Each organization has its own hot-button issues and tracks votes based on those. Not all conservative organizations stress the same issues nor do the liberal ones, let alone those which purport to be nonpartisan.)

Consider the below rankings based on senatorial votes in 2019. As a point of reference, I added Indiana's two senators' rankings and self-proclaimed socialist Bernie Sanders' for comparison. I've also reconciled methodologies across the groups for consistency.

- Americans for Democratic Action (liberal) — Harris 100 percent, Sanders 100 percent, Young 5 percent, Braun 0 percent.
- American Conservative Union (conservative) — Harris 0 percent, Sanders 0 percent, Young 68 percent, Braun 95 percent.
- GovTrack (nonpartisan, liberal scale) — Harris 100 percent, Sanders 98 percent, Young 26 percent, Braun 9 percent.
- Heritage Foundation (conservative) — Harris 0 percent, Sanders 0 percent, Young 69 percent, Braun 96 percent.
- Progressive Punch (liberal) — Harris 89 percent, Sanders 82 percent, Young 2 percent, Braun 1 percent.
- Voteview (nonpartisan, liberal rank) — Harris #1, Sanders #4, Young #80, Braun N/A.

Can any sentient being look at these scores and call Harris a moderate? The New York Times apparently can, describing her as a "pragmatic moderate" for good measure. Then again, the Times is in a free fall into ideological hucksterism so this shouldn't surprise.

Thomas Jefferson famously quipped that given the choice between newspapers without government and government without newspapers, he would choose newspapers. That's a toss-up at best for me so I think I like this Jefferson quote better:

"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 and errors."

Old Tom must have been time-traveling into 2020.

I've Had Enough Negativity

(Aug. 21) — I am sick and tired of all the negativity, the vitriol, the hatred, the divisiveness, the assault on everything I believe in.

Having said that, I now feel much better. And I will make my small contribution to helping others

like me feel positive, encouraged, optimistic and thankful to be Americans.

Sure, no matter what I write here will do nothing to cancel the Cancel Culture movement or find a cure for Covid-19. But maybe, just maybe, I can redirect people's obsession away from the 24-hour news cycle which exists only to enrage people.

Let's start with the pandemic. How many people do you know personally who have been diagnosed with the disease? In my case it is just one, a niece who works as a hospital nurse. She tested positive early in the pandemic and is fine now.

After 45 years of being associated with higher education as a student and administrator, I now have the privilege of being a volunteer at an elementary school. We started back up with most of our students in attendance. The students are thankful they finally are back to school with their friends. Two of my grandchildren attend this school so I have an "eye-witness report" on how happy the children are.

I also have the privilege of serving on the board of a faith-based health clinic. We provide free services and prescriptions to poor, uninsured residents of our area. We exist solely on private donations, no insurance or federal funds, and our donors have continued to support us generously during the pandemic. The name of the clinic is Matthew 25, which explains not only what we do but why we do it.

Let me shift now to the Cancel Culture mob and its platform of violent destruction. Fortunately, it can't gain much traction here in northeast Indiana, but one should not place unqualified confidence in the leadership of any community to do the right thing when the pressure is on. We had a close call in my hometown, named for a Revolutionary War general unable to project what thought-police puritans two hundred plus years hence would think. There was talk, but only talk, of removing his statue from downtown.

The flag still flies from homes and businesses as I drive through my city, the flag of choice being

the Red, White and Blue, and I even see the Thin Blue Line variation that honors our police.

Another of my volunteer roles is to serve as a local, district and state officer of the Sons of the American Legion (SAL). I qualify for membership because my father served in the Navy and was in the second wave on D-Day. Allow me to quote several phrases from the preamble to the SAL constitution, which we recite at every meeting:

- To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America
- To foster and uphold a true spirit of Americanism
- To combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses
- To make right the master of might
- To safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy

There are more but you get the point. Our fathers fought for these principles and too many died for them. We Sons perform community service by hosting Boys State, doing flag protocol instruction in schools and assisting with the American Legion's oratorical contest in which high school students present speeches on the Constitution. I was privileged to serve as a judge at the national oratorical finals, coming away impressed with these young people who understand why and how America is what it is.

I am sure the woke generation will point to the number of times I used the word "privilege" in this column. I plead guilty. I am privileged and it has nothing to do with my skin color. If a German shell had hit my dad's LST on June 6, 1944, I wouldn't be writing this column now.

In fact, I am writing it in an American Legion post, surrounded by veterans and those of us who support them. Don't try to cancel their culture; they risked their lives to preserve it.

Too many people make a career out of screaming what is wrong with America. I'm not one of them. We're not perfect but try to identify a nation that is.

There is a Chinese proverb that goes, "It is better to light one little candle than to curse the darkness." I hope I have done that today.

It's All 'Lower' Education Now

(Aug. 14) — I spent my entire professional career in higher education administration, eventually rising to a senior position. I used to be proud of that. No more.

The lofty goals of college study, such as free inquiry and critical thinking, were things we challenged our incoming freshmen to take as their own. Now this Olympian-like quest for well-formed knowledge and liberal mindedness (liberal here being with a small "l") has become a marble man, a statue, rather than a vibrant scholarly journey. And we know what is happening to other marble men across America in these benighted times.

Higher education likely has always been over-represented by those on the left of the political spectrum but that just made the debate more enjoyable. As a member of Young Americans for Freedom back in my undergraduate years, we thrived on the intellectual discourse with any and all comers. It was stimulating — and not just because beer seemed always to be involved — and rewarding in helping to understand how others thought.

Here's one example. I was an economics major and one of my favorite profs was an avowed Marxist. He taught Keynesian economics straight up, something neither of us could stomach much and I guess that created a bond.

This was during the height of the Vietnam War protests but we politically active students inherently appreciated that the public forum was a place for debate and an opportunity to persuade.

Toward the end of my career, I was still proud of my university's commitment to free speech and free inquiry. I may not have been the only voice coming from the right, but very likely the most outspoken. Yet I did know that my perspective as a conservative and devout Christian was not only respected but expected during cabinet-level discussions of potentially controversial issues.

Across our campus, student ideological, religious and political groups freely gathered and conducted their business. We didn't need any free-speech zones; the university campus was created as a marketplace for ideas.

But no more, based on a snowballing dossier of recent events.

Too many of our college campuses have become reeducation camps where unorthodox thinking is to be suppressed, repressed and purged. One voice crying in this wilderness is the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI), a conservative/libertarian not-for-profit organization seeking to keep the voice of classical liberalism and America's founding principles alive. Not always successfully, alas.

When several students at Hobart and William Smith Colleges petitioned the student government for official recognition as an ISI student reading group, they were denied. Why? The existence of such a group "would cause stress to the student body." Seriously? A reading group? At a college dedicated to liberal education? Before straining oneself to defend this decision, please note that this was the only application denied out of 24 petitions.

ISI offers more examples of this putative thought control. Protesters at the College of the Holy Cross disrupted a speech by scholar Heather Mac Donald that effectively canceled it. One wonders what He who hung on that cross thinks about such un-Christlike activity.

The same happened to economist Arthur Laffer when he tried to speak at Binghamton University. Previously these campus radicals had used violence to stop conservative groups from interacting with students through an information table. All in a good day's work for the anti-intellectual hit squad.

It seems that daily we learn of incidents where students and professors are faced with sanctions for exercising free speech. Perhaps the most publicized one involved tenured Princeton professor Joshua Katz who faced investigation by his president who was quoted as describing Katz's use of free speech as irresponsible. Fortunately for

Katz, Princeton backed down and no investigation was commenced. But the Princeton president did threaten an investigation, academic freedom and the First Amendment notwithstanding. That alone should send a chilling pall across academia.

Let's bring this closer to home. What's the climate at Indiana's universities and private colleges? I've been retired for close to a decade now so I have no first-hand knowledge but, given the national trend, a healthy dose of skepticism is called for.

Here is the question for parents of today's prospective college students. That alma mater you root for on Saturday afternoons may no longer be what you fondly remember. Put aside your alumni loyalty and do an internet search of what is happening there. Do you find a disconnect between what you recall and what is happening today?

My grandchildren are still elementary school age but I am worried, very worried, about what colleges will be like when they reach that age. It may be a moot point as higher education continues to price itself beyond the reach of most, all the while providing questionable career advantage for its graduates. It certainly can no longer claim to be educating free people for a democratic society.

Higher education's day of reckoning draws ever near.

John Adams and the Rule of Law

(Aug. 5) — John Adams is the Rodney Dangerfield of the Founding Fathers; he gets no respect.

That is an exaggeration but not by much.

He was, at the same time, one the most intellectual of the Founding Fathers and no doubt the most ill-tempered.

It seems he just couldn't help being irascible, given to moodiness and bouts of brooding. Because of his superior intelligence, he could think easily at the conceptual level so why couldn't everyone else? He was determined to prove his point and win the debate, regardless of whom he

irritated in the process. One would expect to see his picture next to the dictionary's definition of pedantic.

Yet he made substantive contributions to our independence and the establishment of a model republic. It was Adams, the Massachusetts man, who nominated Virginian George Washington as the commander in chief of the patriot army. No Washington, no independence...and I'm not alone in that opinion.

It was Adams who convinced Thomas Jefferson to draft the Declaration of Independence with its eternal claim to natural rights in its introductory paragraphs. At least that's what I learned from the musical "1776," which my wife made me attend.

Although he was not physically present at the Constitutional Convention, it was Adams' concept of a multi-branch government with a balance of powers that framed the final document. Several of the states leaned on Adams' text from the Massachusetts' constitution when writing their own. I hold that his thinking was exceptionally influential as the new nation determined how to govern itself.

However, his most valuable and lasting contribution to our American polity may have been his defense of the British soldiers tried for murder in the wake of the Boston Massacre.

We all learned, or at least should have, the hagiographic version of this event — British troops fired their muskets into a group of unarmed protestors resulting in five deaths. The truth, as always, is more nuanced than that. Were projectiles hurled at the soldiers? Was the mob threatening the soldiers' lives? Were they given the command to fire or did it occur spontaneously? Was it willful murder or self-defense?

Bostonians knew what it was, or at least believed what they wanted it to be. Many would have liked to dispense summary judgment right then. Today we call this lynching but its ugly nature never restrains a mob's collective mind at the time. In the following weeks the public seemed to be united in a conviction of guilt. Even

clergymen contributed to the foment in their sermons by demanding guilty verdicts regardless of evidence.

Colonial officials reacted by arresting the eight soldiers and their captain, all of whom surrendered peacefully to civil authority. But could they receive a fair trial in this torrid Boston climate? Maybe, but only if someone would be willing to defend them at risk to his reputation if not his livelihood as an attorney.

John Adams stepped up. Why? Because he believed what he learned about English jurisprudence and the rights of Englishmen to a fair trial. Never one to take the popular way out of a dilemma, Adams faced down the mobocracy that was the Boston streets and mounted a masterful defense.

Fortunately, the trial transcript exists in reasonably good form as well as personal notes taken by Adams and his prosecutorial opponent. Dan Abrams and his writing colleague David Fisher have published a short yet masterful account of the events of that night, the mood of the town and the actual trials. (See “John Adams under Fire: The Founding Father’s Fight for Justice in the Boston Massacre Murder Trial” published this year.) Abrams is a lawyer and legal affairs reporter for ABC news so he can blend legal analysis with a journalist’s training in telling a story. It is well worth the read.

Adams’ legacy is not that he won the case but that he faced hostile public opinion to defend a principle that is fundamental to our Anglo-Saxon endowment as a free people — the right to a fair trial. We are to be tried according to the rule of law, not the current passions of the mob. This is why George Will says America is a creedal nation. These principles we hold, precariously these days it seems, as universals.

In addition to the rule of law, the American creed includes natural rights (“unalienable” rights according to the Declaration), freedom of conscience in speech and religion, freedom to hold and dispose of property, freedom from arbitrary governmental actions, freedom to elect our own representatives and the right to a

“pursuit of happiness.” Don’t look for these beliefs to be on placards in our burning downtowns.

What if John Adams were around today to see what is happening? Suffice it to say, he would not be a darling of the circus that is our national media. He was much too blunt with a coolly logical way of thinking and speaking. Imagine how our woke media would deal with Adams’ absolute devotion to classical liberalism in this night of neo-totalitarianism. Do we no longer care about liberty, he would ask. And they would just switch to a commercial.

But his most unforgivable sin? It would be the same today as it was during his life. He was nearly always right. But that is the fate of a prophet in his own country.

Is it Fair to Soak the Poor?

(July 29) — We have all heard enough of the progressive-liberal mantra that the rich don’t pay their fair share. Proposals for millionaire taxes, which somehow always seem to hit hardest on the middle class, are a dime a dozen . . . provided they are on someone else’s dime.

Okay, but look at several recent highly publicized demands which put the lie to their claims of ideological purity.

First, there are the blue-state governors such as Andrew Cuomo of New York complaining that his state sends more tax dollars to the federal government than it gets back in benefits. That’s not fair, he cries.

Could it be that New York and other high-income states pay more in federal income taxes than states with lower per capita incomes because, wait for this, they are richer? Isn’t that a commandment in the progressive decalog? Shouldn’t calls for soaking the rich include rich states?

Cuomo’s whining is based on a disputed study by the Rockefeller Institute but no matter. If he really believes the progressive creed on taxing the rich until they bleed, shouldn’t he be proud of New York’s doing its fair share to support those of us in the poorer states? I think the behaviorists

call this cognitive dissonance but where I hang out, we call it hypocrisy.

Second, there is an even more egregious example of this hypocrisy. Bernie Sanders and most of the other Democratic presidential wannabes demanded during the primaries that student loan balances be forgiven. The \$1.6 trillion, yes trillion, owed in student loan balances should just go away. Let the taxpayers pick up the tab.

Expect this to make the Democrat Party's platform this summer as the Bidenites concede whatever is necessary to keep the socialist wing of the party energized to vote. There is the political calculus to consider. After all, 45 million potential voters with student loan balances, and nearly a million of those owing more than \$200,000, are ripe targets for campaign promises of free money.

So consider these scenarios, all of which will become reality if the election goes the way the mainstream media talking heads (I won't call them journalists) are exuberantly predicting:

If you never went to college because you couldn't afford it, you get to contribute to paying off someone else's student loans.

If you went to a local community college or university and lived with your parents to avoid borrowing student loans, you too will pay

If you attended part time so you could continue to work to pay your tuition and avoid borrowing, pay up

If you borrowed the minimal amount to get by and worked part time through college, pay up

If you faithfully paid off your student loans by sacrificing in your post-college lifestyle, pay up.

But if you went to an expensive private college on the east coast and borrowed heavily, line up for the handout. Bernie wants to send the cash your way.

If you were a child of a "privileged" family able to attend the high-cost college of your choice requiring substantial student loan borrowing, line up. Bernie will take care of you too.

If you had the opportunity to attend a prestigious graduate school and needed to borrow

heavily to get through, line up. Bernie's got you covered.

Since progressives continually tell us the top "1 percent" seem to be the root of all evil in America today, consider this. The top one percent of student loan borrowers hold 45 percent of all outstanding student loan debt. So what we have is a progressive demand to transfer funds from working class Americans to the children of the upper and upper-middle classes who ran up hundreds of thousands of dollars in student loans to attend elite colleges well beyond the reach of the vast majority of working Americans. This sure sounds like "privilege," which is supposed to be a four-letter word amongst the woke generation.

Forget the economics of this insanity. We're talking about fairness, aren't we? Only if we throw out all logic and common sense.

The word hypocrite comes to us from ancient Greek, meaning someone who wears a mask and acts out a part. Look at the 23rd chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel where Christ calls the Pharisees hypocrites for the virtues they flaunt in public but can't be found in their souls.

Gov. Cuomo and Sen. Sanders, perhaps it's time for some introspection about your progressive principles.

Hypocrites, indeed.

Secession Lite

(July 22) — Our nation is in trouble, deep trouble, and there is no gainsaying that.

We have always been divided as a people, at least during my lifetime. Perhaps the 1950s with Ike in the White House is an exception but then I may be looking back on a childhood that becomes more and more idyllic as I age. Being of high school and college age during the Vietnam era was my initiation into the darker side of our American ethos, one that prefers strife to collegiality, emotion to reason, name-calling to debate.

We used to be able to count on politicians to tamp things down by working within a rather narrow ideological band for national and local policy. Sure, elections could be contentious but we accepted the

outcome and moved on as most new administrations wouldn't really change much within what George Will and others have called the American creed.

I can't point to the exact moment when we lost this consensus but in retrospect I would suggest that it was Robert Bork's nomination to the Supreme Court in 1987. Rather than examine his juridical qualifications and his constitutional IQ, the opposition launched a campaign to defeat his nomination on purely political grounds. The snowball has been accelerating downhill ever since.

It's not that the United States was in some kind of utopian bliss prior to this. We had our moments even at our founding. Think of the nasty presidential campaign of 1800. And then there was the Civil War which followed as the illogical conclusion to a rapid descent into the abyss in the decade prior to that.

It's that same abyss that confronts us now. Even a casual reading of the history of the 1850s informs us of the dangers when people stop listening and just yell louder. We are back there in terms of the stridency of discourse and propensity for violence.

So will we end up in the same inferno? Is another secession crisis in the offing? Some think so and too many of these are cheering it on.

California has an active secession movement, wanting to rid itself of the deplorables residing between both coasts. Counties in Oregon, Washington and Illinois would like to affiliate with neighboring, less liberal-progressive states with lower taxes and more social tolerance of traditional values. We have those on both the left and the right who believe our union is fatally flawed. The extreme left and, let's be honest, its liberal elite supporters are resolved to beat down any opposition to its totalitarian cultural goals. The movement isn't called "Cancel Culture" without cause.

Constantly losing to the mobs on the street and the moral cowards in the boardrooms and statehouses has driven some conservative thinkers to despair of our union's permanence. If the union is to dissolve, shouldn't we attempt to set the framework for this dissolution, they ask?

This is where they stumble. Could a 21st century secession movement succeed? The last time this was tried the result was nearly three quarters of a million

deaths. Are we willing to chance this again? Most of us, thankfully, say no.

Still, there might be a middle road that could work. George Mason law professor F.H. Buckley is the godfather of this concept, one he calls "Secession Lite." (See his book "American Secession: The Looming Threat of a National Breakup" published this year.)

What he is advocating is really nothing more than a return to the federalism envisioned by our Founding Fathers and enshrined in the Ninth and Tenth amendments. Don't recall learning about those in civics class? You certainly won't if you are under the age of 50. You really ought to read them and then rethink your perspective on today's mess.

Buckley's vision is for there to be a set of commonly held principles of the first order, including the need for a central government to provide national security and guarantee basic rights, those proceeding from natural law. These are often called "negative" rights in that they enjoin the government from usurping these rights from the people. See the Tenth Amendment. All others remain vested in the states or local communities and most importantly the people. Think of cultural or lifestyle issues and of tax-supported social welfare programs. If you want open carry for handguns, move to a state that allows it. If you want a substantial municipal infrastructure to support homelessness, move to a city that is willing to tax its residents to pay for it. In a word, vote with your feet.

Canada operates this way to a considerable extent. Its Charter of Rights and Freedoms from 1982 requires only a handful to be universal across the nation. All others can be interposed at the provincial level by invocation of the Charter's "notwithstanding" clause. Think of Quebec and the French language.

Would that work in the United States? Buckley thinks so, or maybe he just really hopes so. His solution is the only credible one I have heard that can turn us from our stampede toward the abyss. I'm no fan of Friedrich Nietzsche but his quote is even more haunting today:

"When you look into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you." ♦

The Bookshelf

John Adams under Fire

John Adams is not the most likeable of our Founding Fathers due mostly to his curmudgeonly disposition. In the principles column, however, he is near the top. Perhaps the most principled act he performed was to defend the British soldiers after the Boston Massacre.

Think back to what it must have been like: Mobs roaming the streets, governmental authority challenged and threatened with violence, harassment and worse visited on those with the wrong beliefs, and arson at the ready to prove the mob's point. Wait, that's 2020 America but 1770 Boston wasn't too different.

Dan Abrams and David Fisher have chronicled the situation surrounding the event and then reproduced the trial almost verbatim in their new book, "John Adams under Fire: The Founding Father's Fight for Justice in the Boston Massacre Murder Trial" (Hanover Square Press 2020, 313 pages, \$17 hardcover Amazon). Adams is a legal correspondent for ABC news enabling him to tell a clear, compelling story. He uses extant transcripts from the trial to put the reader into the public gallery of the courthouse.

Abrams and Fisher also paint an empathetic, even sympathetic, portrait of Adams doing his principled duty in defense of the rule of law, and public opinion be damned. One can't help but be impressed with Adams' knowledge of and application of Anglo-Saxon law. He references multiple previous legal opinions and he quotes extensively from the writings of England's greatest jurists, all the while walking a tightrope between achieving justice for his clients and remaining true to his patriotic disposition against the British military occupation. In a practical

sense, he needed to gain acquittal for the soldiers without condemning the Boston mob and thereby delegitimizing the right to protest.

The authors have collaborated on two other trial histories, including Abraham Lincoln's last murder trial before becoming president. Abrams' legal expertise and Fisher's skill as an historian serve up an effective verbal partnership.

Recommendation: Good choice to see Adams at his patriotic best.

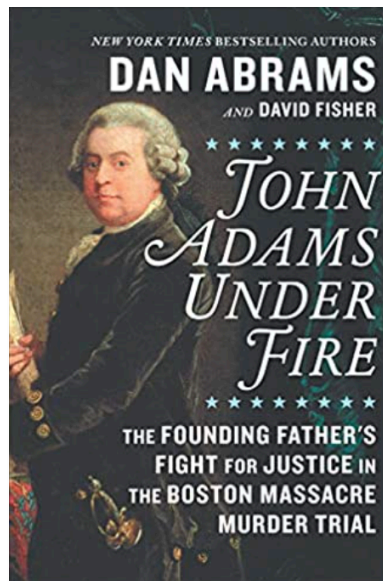
George Washington, Entrepreneur

A friend from church visited Mount Vernon and came back excited about George Washington's farm management techniques. He got my interest so when I saw that a new book on this subject had been published, it moved to the top of my Everest-like reading stack.

"George Washington, Entrepreneur: How Our Founding Father's Private Business Pursuits

Changed America and the World" (All Points Books 2020, 176 pages plus an extensive appendix, \$21 hardcover Amazon) by John Berlau is a study in industry and agriculture as practiced by an innovative capitalist who was constantly on the lookout for new ways to maximize his estate's profits. When Washington inherited Mount Vernon, it was a typical Virginia plantation growing tobacco with slave labor. He quickly figured such a course would result in bankruptcy and determined to diversify. Some of his innovations included sheep-

raising for textile production, whiskey distillation, mule breeding, a greenhouse for tropical plants, an iron furnace and a fishery. He raised 60 different crops using crop rotation, manuring and market pricing analysis techniques that Indiana's current farmers would recognize. For example, he discovered through experimentation that sheep manure was best for wheat yields.

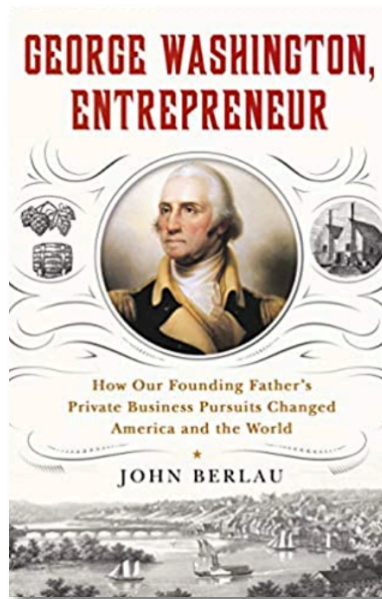


He traveled much as a young man, and in his public life observed whatever was unique with the thought of introducing it back home. He read extensively and corresponded with those who could advance his knowledge. And he reciprocated with his support for inventive genius both as president and as a private citizen.

Martha, often left with farm management responsibilities while her husband was off creating the American republic, shared George's entrepreneurial spirit. Mount Vernon was certainly an "agro-industrial enterprise," as Berlau calls it. Disparaged by Thomas Jefferson as one "slow in operation, being little aided by invention or imagination," one wonders then why Washington left a profitable estate and Jefferson died a bankrupt. In addition to George's relentless drive to maximize profits, he had Martha and a succession of competent farm managers to oversee the operation during his extensive absences.

And yes, Washington owned slaves and used their labor to his benefit. He was only one of several Virginia plantation owners who realized early that slavery was both a moral and an economic problem for them. He is well known for freeing his slaves in his will, but what is not generally known is that he refused to sell a slave without the slave's consent nor would he allow a slave family to be separated. No slave ever consented to sale. No surprise there.

The author ends with a chapter entitled "Mount Vernon and George Washington's Legacy." He uses this chapter to align Washington with today's anti-regulation, anti-licensing movement. He cites Washington's early career as a surveyor, one that he learned studying under a master and without any governmental imprimatur. (Virginia, by the way, still does not require a state license to practice surveying.) He ends, appropriately, with Washington's farewell



address in which our first president cautioned the government not to encroach upon liberty in the exercise of its powers. He, in turn, planned to retire to his beloved Mount Vernon to enjoy the "happy reward" of economic freedom under the rule of law.

Mount Vernon today is privately owned with no governmental financial support. It generates income from donations, of course, but also from a well-marketed display of an eighteenth-century plantation as it operated back then. Added to the historical

exhibits are some modern additions such as a library for students of Washington. The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association is a worthy entrepreneurial successor to this truly great man.

Recommendation: Fascinating. I thought I knew everything important to know about George. Maybe now I do.

Autumn of the Black Snake

While George Washington is the touchstone of American exceptionalism, he had some help from other talented individuals. Anthony Wayne may have been in the second rank of this talent crop but he was able to shine in large part due to Washington's insight into Wayne's character and capabilities, enabling him to call on him at just the right place at the right time. Wayne's finest hour, in spite of what the woke culture would have us swallow, was his campaign against the northwest Indian confederacy here in the 1790's. Led by the military genius Little Turtle, the Miamis and their allies soundly defeated two previous American armies under Josiah Harmar and Arthur St. Clair. The lessons of those defeats were absorbed by Wayne, culminating in the U. S. Army's strategic victory at Fallen Timbers in 1794.

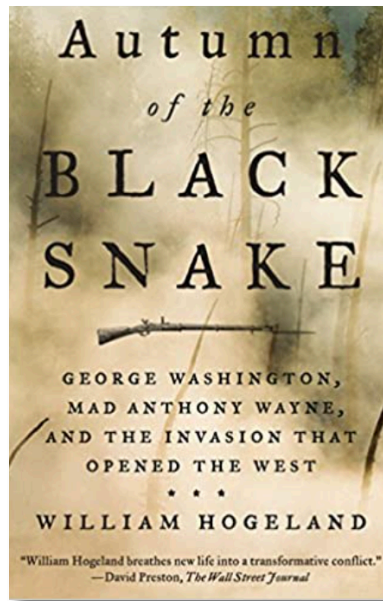
Historian William Hogeland's "Autumn of the Black Snake: The Creation of the U.S. Army and the Invasion that Opened the West" (Farrar,

Straus and Giroux 2017, 387 pages plus notes, \$18 hardcover Amazon) recounts Wayne's campaign and battlefield victory but only as a concluding demonstration of its central theme — America's creation of a standing army against apparently overwhelming political opposition.

Hogeland is no fan of Washington or anyone else for that matter. He views Washington as an unethical land speculator, that era's version of a crony capitalist always conniving for personal gain. Yet he does credit Washington with knowing what he wanted and with an unrelenting drive to achieve it in a patient manner. What Washington wanted was unfettered westward expansion protected by a real army, not an unreliable mustering of untrained state militia. Opposing him was Thomas Jefferson, who viewed amateur militia as the ideal citizen-soldiers in his agrarian utopia. The irony here, Hogeland points out, is that a professional army did not become permanent until the Jefferson administration.

This is as much a political book as a military one. It begins with St. Clair's defeat at the headwaters of the Wabash River in northwest Ohio and the reverberations it caused in the national capital. Scant attention is paid to Harmar's defeat at Kekionga in what is now downtown Fort Wayne, which I found unfortunate. Rather most of the book is devoted to the political machinations at Philadelphia, a battle Washington eventually won.

Hogeland doesn't think much of Anthony Wayne the man but gives him his due as a sound military planner. He spends too much time on Wayne's personal life and his failures as a father and husband but maybe that is his point — how an imperfect human being can rise above his own weaknesses when the situation demands. Of course, there is the obligatory reference to Wayne the slave owner, who managed to go bankrupt in



his South Carolina rice-planting endeavor.

Hogeland's writing style is unique and captivating, causing the reader to wonder if the book would be better read aloud. I found it to be reminiscent of a college lecture, and not a boring one either. In this regard the book reads at a rapid pace.

For better coverage of the actual battles in Fort Wayne and northwest Ohio, James Perry's "Arrogant Armies: Great Military Disasters and the Generals Behind Them" has a chapter on Little Turtle's victories over the two

American armies. The best account in my opinion is noted Civil War historian Wiley Sword's "President Washington's Indian War: The Struggle for the Old Northwest, 1790-1795."

Recommendation: Well written in style but too contemptuous in its treatment of the main characters. Still, it may be the best account of the political fight to establish an American standing army.

The Last Winter of the Weimar Republic

The last two presidential primary seasons have been circuses, with comparisons between certain circus performers and our horde of presidential wannabes in both parties better left unsaid. Our system's saving grace is that eventually we end up with only two candidates to choose from and these two candidates can expect to split 95% or more of the votes cast. There is much to commend in a two party, first past the post system.

Parliamentary systems that are based on proportional voting can't help but devolve into instability as multiple minority parties try to form coalitions, only to see their governments fall at the slightest provocation. A prime example is Germany's short-lived Weimar Republic period after World War I.

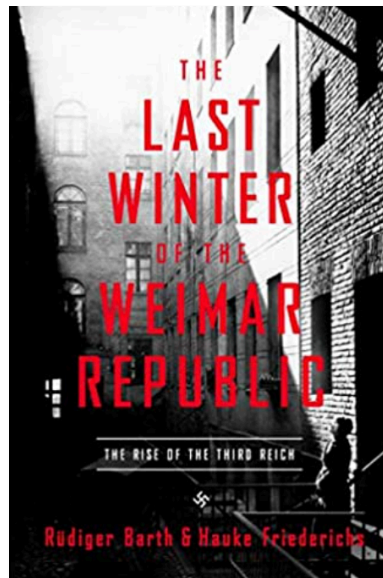
To be sure, Germany was ripe for political upheaval given that it was charged with sole

blame for World War I, including the payment of reparations and the loss of much of its industrial base. The Great Depression just made a bad situation worse. Such was fertile breeding ground for splinter movements and extremist platforms to be shouted out amidst the political din.

Much has been written about the rise of the National Socialist German Workers Party but a recent German book by two ex-journalists takes a refreshing approach to telling the story. In their “The Last Winter of the Weimar Republic: The Rise of the Third Reich” (Pegasus Books 2020, 406 pages including brief notes, \$19 hardcover Amazon), Rudiger Barth and Hauke Friederichs follow a day-by-day chronology beginning mid-Nov. 1932 through Jan. 30, 1933, when Hitler was appointed Reich Chancellor.

Each day is a short chapter introduced by headlines or short quotes from German newspapers on that day. The text of the chapters is in vignette style, brief accounts of various characters as to what they did or said on that day as if the reader is paging through their personal diaries. The character list includes the great politicians of the era, government bureaucrats, socialites, foreign observers and the occasional man on the street. We eavesdrop on how they were reacting to the continuing crisis of a dysfunctional democracy hamstrung by a constitutional mandate to achieve a parliamentary majority from increasingly antagonistic minority parties. On top of this political dung heap sat the legendary Reich President Paul von Hindenburg, desperately trying to keep the Nazis and communists out of power but finding no other party leader capable of assembling a working majority cabinet.

Meanwhile, Adolph Hitler was playing a bluffing game as he demanded full power for himself while his Nazi party was losing seats in



provincial elections. By steadfastly refusing to cooperate in any coalition that did not include him as chancellor, he forced Hindenburg into a corner that the old field marshal couldn't extricate himself from. As Germany moved from purgatory to hell, one can almost sympathize with the elderly Hindenburg and others who thought how much worse could Hitler make things? Quite a bit, as we see with 20/20 hindsight.

This approach to telling the story is absolutely perfect to bring the reader along, day by day, wondering

what will happen next. Traditional history can recount what happened and even explain the how and why, but it can't maintain the suspenseful anticipation that somebody will do something to avert the crisis. I suppose one should try to understand the petty party leaders who hated each other more than they feared extremists like the Nazis. By resolutely refusing to see any common goals among themselves, they froze the Weimar government to where only a self-proclaimed strong man would be seen as acceptable.

Yet there is a parallel between our America and Weimar, particularly as one looks at the primary season with a dozen or more candidates all pandering to the most extreme, or perhaps the most fed up, of its registered voters. The 2016 presidential election was the first one in history in which both candidates had negative acceptability quotients. Our modern day Democrats are not unique in declaring elections invalid simply because they lost and thereby challenging the legitimacy of the winner, but they would take umbrage if one dared point out whom they are emulating.

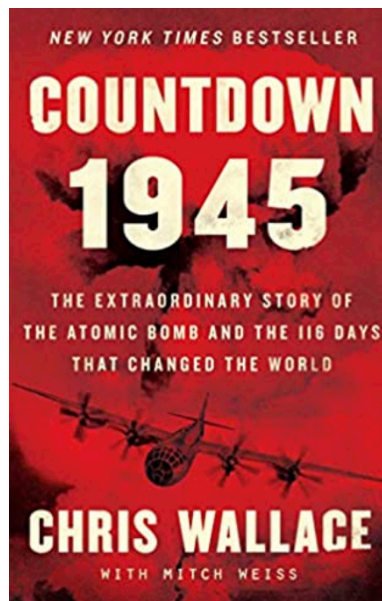
Reading this book truly takes one back in time to 1932-33 Germany. The resemblance to today is eerie and frightening. The book's format and structure makes it seem too real for comfort.

Recommendation: You must read this if you have any interest in the Nazi rise to power or if you fear for where your country is going.

Countdown 1945

By sheer coincidence I read a second book using this same day-by-day structure to unfold its story through the eyes of participants and observers. “Countdown 1945: The Extraordinary Story of the Atomic Bomb and the 116 Days that Changed the World” (Avid Reader Press 2020, 312 pages with notes, \$21 hardcover Amazon) by Chris Wallace and Mitch Weiss recounts the critical stage of the Manhattan project. Would they be able build a usable nuclear bomb? Could it be delivered in time to affect the outcome of the war? Would it be necessary to use it on Japan?

These questions are faced by everyone from the White House to the several labs across the nation to the test site in New Mexico. We hear from presidents, generals, research scientists, lab



technicians, soldiers at the front, airmen training for some undisclosed missions and even from their wives and sweethearts back home.

The final chapter addresses the moral question of the bomb’s destructive power and its introduction of a newer, more dangerous era. The only ones with doubt in 1945 were a few of the scientists. None of the lower level workers, military men or politicians questioned using it. Yes, they had doubts but they also understood that it shortened the war as much as a year early and saved millions American and Japanese of lives.

This is not a technical book nor a military history. Rather, it is a journalistic attempt to tell a story as it unfolds. That should make it interesting to a wider readership.

Recommendation: Perhaps not informative for those who are well read much on the Manhattan project, but interesting nonetheless for its story-telling quality. — *Mark Franke*

Daylight Savings: Is It's Time Up?

The last several years have seen intense debate about the issue of transitioning between standard and daylight saving time. In the United States, the annual advance to daylight saving time in spring, and fall back to standard time in autumn, is required by law (although some exceptions are allowed under the statute). An abundance of accumulated evidence indicates that the acute transition from standard time to daylight saving time incurs significant public health and safety risks, including increased risk of adverse cardiovascular events, mood disorders, and motor vehicle crashes. Although chronic effects of remaining in daylight saving time year-round have not been well studied, daylight saving time is less aligned with human circadian biology — which, due to the impacts of the delayed natural light/dark cycle on human activity, could result in circadian misalignment, which has been associated in some studies with increased cardiovascular disease risk, metabolic syndrome and other health risks. It is, therefore, the position of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine that these seasonal time changes should be abolished in favor of a fixed, national, year-round standard time.

— *American Academy of Sleep Medicine, Sept. 4, 2020*

Backgrounders

Jason Arp, for nine years a trader in mortgaged-backed securities for Bank of America, was reelected last year to his second term representing the 4th District on the Fort Wayne City Council. Arp has served on the Redevelopment Commission, the Community Legacy Investment Committee and as co-chair of the Finance Committee of the Common Council.



A Special Interest at Work

(Sept. 25) — What does it mean to be a community leader or a business leader in your town? In the city where I serve on the council it can mean something different from what the casual observer might think. Sadly, it can mean someone who uses the power of government to further their business interests by either extracting cash or tax subsidies or by having the state impose regulations that impede competition and consumer choice. Often both definitions are satisfied.

Recently we had an opportunity to consider the machinations of the owner of a large automobile dealership in the region as he expanded that portion of his empire in my district. This individual was one of the larger contributors to the mayor's campaign, as highlighted in a study published in the Fall 2017 Indiana Policy Review. In years past, his dealership could be sure to be awarded ample contracts to provide police cruisers and parks-department trucks.

That, however, was as far as we expected the special-interest relationship to go. We were wrong.

As a result of that research, our city council in 2018 overcame a mayoral veto and passed "pay-to-play" legislation that prevented such large campaign donors from also being big vendors to the city. Shortly afterward, however, a lawsuit challenging the action was filed by the real estate developer for the largest car dealership owner in Northeast Indiana.

The court ruled in favor of the developer in June 2019, just after an opinion was issued by the

Indiana Attorney General that our legislation was unconstitutional.

Perhaps coincidentally, over \$30,000 in contributions were made in April and May of that year by the auto dealer and his developer to the mayor's re-election campaign with \$5,000 going to the attorney general's campaign.

A few days after the court victory, the dealership announced plans to build a 50-acre, \$80-million auto mall at the busiest intersection in my district. Nearby residents who would find their single-family neighborhood surrounded by the project contacted me in horror. With little say in the matter, they would find themselves having to drive through a commercial parking lot in order to leave home. Although unaware of the project's details and having to vote on each aspect of the transaction independently, I was invited to a meeting by the dealer and his developer. Concerns of the neighbors, I learned, were of little matter.

I have the privilege of serving on the Redevelopment Commission as our council's appointee. There I learned that by using Tax Increment Financing this community leader would be getting \$7 million dollars of subsidy for his grand car lot. This was arranged on the questionable value stated by the developer. But extrapolating observable values of similar lots to the size of the new project, a more realistic value would set the subsidy close to one-third of the total project cost.

Remember how it works: A special interest uses the power of government to further their business interests by either extracting cash or tax subsidies or by having the state impose regulations that impede competition. Indiana state code Title 9, Article 32, contains 18 chapters of regulations pertaining to dealerships, most of them applying to auto dealers. These regulations make opening a new dealership or even moving a dealership to a new location nearly impossible without friends in legislative and administrative positions in government. In this sort of environment, it makes sense to be a large contributor to nearly every legislator in the region in addition to state officials such as the secretary of state. They will make the decisions on whether

or not your local business faces unfettered competition or enjoys a near monopoly. The auto-dealer cartel is a big influencer in Indiana politics. (To give you an idea of the scope of that influence, a couple of years ago in a television interview our business leader-auto dealer spoke of his friendship with a former U.S. President.)

In our most recent council meeting, the business leader-auto dealer was among those requesting an investigation into why another large economic development project that he favors had stalled. The necessary resolution passed a committee vote but this week it appeared dead. What happened?

An amendment was added expanding the scope of the investigation to allow discovery of all special interests involved in the project — including business leader-auto dealers.

Stepping on Mom-and-Pop Properties

(Sept. 8) — Private property, a foundation block of western civilization, is under attack on many fronts in today's America. It's not surprising that the radical left-wing rioters have been calling for further progress on the road to implement Marx's plan for a socialist utopia.

Signs calling for abolition of rent and destruction of property are standard fair at a Black Lives Matter rally. But perhaps the greatest blow against our right to own private property was struck by the Trump administration this week. It was an order issued by the CDC (Center for Disease Control) to place a moratorium on evictions from residential property.

Americans who believe in individual freedom and personal responsibility might themselves feel homeless in the current array of political parties. Democratic mayors and prosecutors in many cities have allowed the social justice mob to destroy store fronts, factories and churches, causing a great deal of bodily harm along the way.

In some midwestern towns, volunteers have taken to arming themselves to protect the lives, liberty and property of their neighbors in lieu of the police their tax dollars have paid for. This, of course has resulted in deadly violence, as the

mobs don't respect the very premise of private property, much less an individual's right to defend it.

And now the Trump administration has turned on those who had counted on the president to protect them from the mob. And because of election year politics, and the fear of being seen by their constituents as anti-Trump, few Republican congressman have anything to say in opposition to the CDC's unconstitutional dictate. Only Rep. Thomas Massie and Sen. Rand Paul, both Republicans of Kentucky, have condemned the power grab publicly. For despite the unfortunate politics of it, private property must be defended — from all enemies, regardless of party.

In Indiana, Gov. Eric Holcomb followed the lead of other midwestern governors and listed a ban on evictions in his Corona Virus decree of April this year. It was a two-month moratorium that coincided with restaurant and retail closures as well as other encroachments on civil liberties. While egregious, it was implemented in conjunction with stimulus payouts to individuals, so most people had the means to pay their rent. But the new CDC mandate stands alone with no-windfall stimulus check to cushion the blow.

Secure ownership of private property is the fundamental difference between a free-market society and the default setting of the world, that is, the procession of concentrated power in the hands of a select few such as a king and his court or a Stalin and his politburo. But how does merely delaying the eviction of tenants in arrears diminish property rights?

We could get into the timing and certainty of the expected cash flows from which we derive the value of the property, which is all cast in question if an administrative department of the federal government can simply nullify contracts on a political whim. We could talk about the change in the marketability, or even management of real estate if the terms and conditions of the leases were subject to bureaucratic fiat. There is a real danger that such action could reduce the available stock of affordable housing and increase the cost

of rents in the future, given their new uncertainty due to government edict.

You need only imagine it was a room in your house being renting to someone in need of such an arrangement. When the government tells you that you cannot evict someone for non-payment or rent, that room moves from the asset side of the family balance sheet to an immediate liability. You have lost control of your property, your home in this case.

Most rental properties are the possessions of savers — ordinary people who instead of putting all their proverbial eggs in the stock market have decided to invest in local real estate. People in the residential rental business are trying to receive a return on their investment while providing for someone who needs the type of housing they are offering. They are investing in their community, not simply sticking their money in a bank or handing it to a stock broker.

If this action by the Trump administration holds, though, it will irreparably damage these mom-and-pop real estate investors. In their place may come Cabrini-Green style government owned or financed “affordable” housing projects. Housing shortages will be exacerbated.

Meanwhile, those in the government subsidized housing market will get by. They have the staff and experience to gather the taxpayer money that will be made available to solve this new crisis that Washington has created.

Richard Moss, M.D., a surgeon practicing in Jasper, was a candidate for Congress in 2016 and 2018. He has written “A Surgeon’s Odyssey” and “Matilda’s Triumph.”



A George Floyd Postmortem

(Sept. 11) — George Floyd met his fate, as the entire world knows, on May 25, 2020, in Minneapolis when police were called because they say he attempted to pass a counterfeit bill. The initial disturbing video of the encounter with law enforcement showed officer Derek Chauvin holding his knee against the back of Floyd’s neck

for nearly nine minutes. He was face down on the ground and handcuffed as he said that he could not breathe. Floyd, indeed, stopped breathing and subsequently died.

We have been living with non-stop mayhem and violence in our cities since.

The final autopsy report issued by the Hennepin County Medical Examiner indicated that the cause of death was “cardiopulmonary arrest complicating law enforcement subdual restraint, and neck compression.” Under enormous political pressure, it also stated that the manner of death was homicide.

The media, Democrats, and their leftist militias, Black Lives Matter and Antifa, all hold that the Floyd episode is another example of police racism and brutality targeting blacks. But the contradictions in the story suggest otherwise.

Two of the four officers who responded are non-white. The Chief of the Minneapolis Police, Medaria Arradondo, is black. Minneapolis is a Democrat run city. Its Mayor, Jacob Frey, is a Democrat as is their city council and state governor, Tim Walz. Minnesota has voted Democrat in every national election since 1932 including the Reagan landslide of 1984, the only state Reagan lost. Are the critics then stating that the Democrats who run the police, city and state racists?

There were suppressed videos as the outrage festered and our cities burned. Later, body-cam videos of the other three officers present during the arrest were released, including Tou Thao (Asian), Thomas Lane, and Alexander Kueng (black) showing Floyd to be highly agitated and erratic. He resisted arrest prior to the officers placing him on the ground. He appears to have lost all self-awareness, complains of stomach and neck pain and foams at the mouth. The officers struggled to get him in the back of the squad car. Once there, he complains that he “can’t breathe.” He then leaves the car on the opposite side. He asks the cops if he can get on the ground because he is having trouble breathing. In another video Floyd is seen in his car prior to the arrest swallowing a white pill,

apparently doing drugs or, perhaps, attempting to conceal evidence by ingestion.

None of the four officers in the case used racial slurs or referred to his race. There was no evidence that race motivated them at all. Further, why would the officers, particularly Chauvin, deliberately murder Floyd in broad daylight with multiple witnesses, and iPhone and body cam videos? If it was their intent to murder Floyd, why did they call the ambulance and help Floyd after the medical team arrived?

Previously suppressed court documents showed that the chief medical examiner, Dr. Andrew Baker, felt that the fentanyl level in Floyd's blood was "pretty high," and could be "a fatal level of fentanyl under normal circumstances." Dr. Baker also said that "if Mr. Floyd had been found dead in his home . . . and there were no other contributing factors he would conclude that it was an overdose death." Baker, referring to Floyd's fentanyl level of 11 ng/ml, told investigators that "deaths have been certified with levels of 3." In another memorandum filed May 26, the Attorney's Office said Baker concluded, "The autopsy showed no physical evidence suggesting that Mr. Floyd died of asphyxiation." Floyd also tested positive for the Covid virus on April 3.

In another document, Baker said, "this is a fatal level of fentanyl under normal circumstances." Other documents also said that Floyd had a "heavy heart" and "at least one artery was 75 percent blocked." The Armed Forces Medical Examiner agreed with Baker's findings, writing that Floyd's "death was caused by the police subdual and restraint in the setting of severe hypertensive atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease and methamphetamine and fentanyl intoxication."

So, if the knee on neck didn't kill him, what did? Floyd overdosed on fentanyl, which stopped his breathing and his heart, known as cardiopulmonary arrest, resulting in death — whether the officers had encountered him or not. The stress of the arrest and positioning did not help but with the amount of fentanyl he

ingested, he would have died anyway. He also had morphine, amphetamine, alcohol and marijuana in his system. He died of cardiopulmonary arrest, caused by a fatal fentanyl overdose and underlying cardiac disease. He sealed his own fate.

Derek Chauvin is accused of second-degree murder and manslaughter, the other three charged as accomplices or aiding and abetting second-degree murder and manslaughter. The first charge carries a sentence of 40 years, the second a sentence of 10 years. Yet, none of the officers sought to murder Floyd. There was no intent to do so. You cannot prove murder or manslaughter unless there is intent. Although it has since been changed, at the time, Minneapolis police training materials show pictures of a suspect, face down, handcuffed, with knee on neck. Chauvin was simply following police protocol. The autopsy and videos demonstrate it was not racial and not murder. These officers are innocent. The police, including Chauvin, will and should be acquitted. It was a fraud, a manufactured lie.

The question remaining is why did authorities not release the evidence earlier to prevent the violence and rioting? Why did they let cities burn and not save innocent lives? Must we imprison innocent men to appease the mob? Why wasn't the exculpatory evidence released sooner to stop the riots, looting, destruction and death?

A Freshman Senator's Leftward Lean

(July 24) — I watched the interview of my friend and former political opponent, Sen. Mike Braun, Republican of Indiana, on the "Tucker Carlson Show" earlier this month on the topic of BLM and police reform. I know Senator Braun because we are both from Jasper, Indiana, a small town in south-central Indiana. He attended my children's bar and bat mitzvahs. He is an immensely successful businessman whose company employs more than 600 individuals.

Mike and I ran for the state representative seat for Indiana's 63rd district in 2014 in the Republican primary. We spoke before the same

audiences and sat at the same tables. We discussed issues and philosophies. He defeated me handily.

He cannot be described as a movement conservative, which means that after winning the Senate seat in 2018 he was likely to move leftward once ensconced in D.C. He favored lower taxes and large deductibles for health insurance coverage. All well and good, but limited. Beyond that, I felt he was not well-grounded on national or international matters, or on energy or immigration. Nor on cultural issues, which Republicans have ignored for decades to the nation's detriment.

Braun provided a clue of the direction he would take when in his first year in the Senate he joined with Sen. Chris Coons, D-DE, to form the first Senate bipartisan caucus on "finding solutions to 'climate change.'" Not a good start, Mike. Still, I thought, in most ways, at least, he would have conservative, common sense instincts as a Jasper man, Midwesterner and successful businessman.

I could not have been more wrong. Braun's response to the post-George Floyd rioting was to introduce a bill named the Reforming Qualified Immunity Act. This bill would have taken aim at "qualified immunity," which protects police from frivolous lawsuits pursued in the regular discharge of an officer's duties. Braun, in so doing, was accepting the leftist premise that one of the significant problems confronting blacks in America was the statistically invalid claim that there is widespread police brutality targeting blacks. He neglected to mention the exploding rates of black out-of-wedlock childbirth, welfare dependency, drug addiction, criminality, incarceration and the formation of an entrenched black underclass since Great Society.

Braun felt that police needed to be held accountable. He brought up the cases of George Floyd, Rayshard Brooks and Breonna Taylor. He signaled his support for Black Lives Matter, a Marxist organization that has called for the killing of police and the abolition of the "Western prescribed nuclear family."

We also learn of the efforts of Sen. John Cornyn, R-TX, who sponsored a bill to make "Juneteenth" a federal holiday. This day, June 19, marks the anniversary of the last slaves officially liberated in Texas and the Confederacy in 1865 after the Civil War had already ended. Senators Ron Johnson, R-WI, and James Lankford, R-OK agreed with the bill but went a step further by recommending exchanging it for Columbus Day, effectively eliminating that holiday, a position advocated by BLM Marxists. Johnson sited concerns over the debt. This, after Johnson and most of Congress had already voted for stimulus packages of more than \$2 trillion in the wake of the Covid pandemic and a likely federal deficit of \$4 trillion for 2020.

In the aftermath of the George Floyd incident on May 25, Republican Sen. Majority Leader, Mitch McConnell, of Kentucky, announced to reporters on Capitol Hill that "we are still wrestling with America's original sin [of slavery]." He later spoke of "obvious racial discrimination" in policing that would require legislation.

Joining a protest against police brutality, Republican Sen. Mitt Romney of Utah stated that "We need to stand up and say that black lives matter." A GOP led Senate Armed Services Committee approved a proposal to strip Confederate names from military bases. House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-CA, said he was "not opposed" to renaming bases.

These Republican efforts come as avowed Communist activists pull down statues, deface monuments, loot, burn, and pillage their way through the land, undertaking to destroy our economic and political systems and erase our history. The tactic of destroying memorials of Robert E. Lee and other confederates moved at lightning speed to engulf the founders and other historic American heroes, including Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, Grant and Frederick Douglass. Columbus also became a favored target. He, after all, began the Age of Exploration, and thus the expansion of European powers into the New World, bringing Western civilization in its wake. For Leftist book burners, Columbus is a genocidal

racist, responsible for Western colonialism, slavery, and oppression of “indigenous people.” Their cultural jihad has now moved to our churches, synagogues, and Jesus himself. Statues and images of Jesus represent, to the Left, not a middle Eastern Jew of two millennia ago, but a white European and a “form of white supremacy.”

The goal of the anarchist-communists is not limited to the overthrow of the American republic, this most successful exemplar of Western civilization. No, that would be insufficient for the nihilists who reject all things that occurred before yesterday. Rather, they seek to take their scorched earth revolution to Europe and beyond, to ancient Israel, Athens, Jesus, and the Cross. Their objective is the obliteration of Western civilization.

So in the face of this cultural onslaught by the Left supported by our dominant institutions, including academia, the media, the Democrat Party and corporate America, the Republicans speak of “police reform,” renaming military bases and eliminating Columbus Day. But then Republicans begin every confrontation with the Left by accepting their premises and narrative, fighting, in effect, on their own territory and disagreeing minimally if at all, seemingly oblivious to the threat. Wars, however, are not won by playing defense. Republicans should begin by defending our culture, institutions, and history, which is more than they currently do. They should extoll our legacy of human rights, liberty, Constitutional governance, and Western achievements in art, music, literature, science, and technology. Our unparalleled standard of living and material, moral, and spiritual riches should be proudly brandished and upheld.

Republicans must go on the offensive, and attack the decadent, degenerate Left, within our country and without, their immorality and social dysfunction, and the pure evil of their ideology, their doctrine of enslavement. Point out their record of poverty, oppression, and genocide. Describe the devastation of the Soviet Union, Red China and the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. Underscore the colossal failures of Marxism, the

hundred million deaths that occurred at the hands of socialist dictators. Wrap the Marxist record of destruction around the necks of their successors in the American Left and the Democrat Party who now openly embrace that corrupt system. Draw inspiration from a previous Republican leader, Ronald Reagan, who, in another era, confronted tyranny and defended liberty. Reagan lambasted the Soviets as the “evil empire,” and demanded that Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev “tear down this wall” to the chagrin of RINOs and Democrats of his day.

But that is not what you will get from the BLM Republicans, our chest-less Republican boys. They are averse to political warfare or lack the stomach for it. A new political vehicle is required, or the party drastically reformed. It must become a party and movement that will unabashedly defend our institutions and history. Only when we have such a party, capable of attacking the Revolutionary Left, can we save the country.

Lisa Conyers, an adjunct scholar of the Indiana Policy Review, is the co-author with Paul Harvey of “Welfare for the Rich,” to be released Aug. 4, 2020. Conyers has led a foundation seminar in Fort Wayne on how the poor are hurt by social welfare.



Welfare for the Rich

(July 31) — Our book, “Welfare for the Rich,” is designed to inform Americans — especially taxpayers who are footing most of the bill — about the massive movement of money from millions of middle- and lower-income Americans to much wealthier people and corporations that do not need and should not be entitled to these favors.

What’s most remarkable about these policies is their variety and ubiquity. While today’s politicians — especially those vying for the presidential contest in 2020 — are proposing ways that the government should act to reduce income and wealth inequality, we ask, at the least, that the government stop making inequality worse. Ironically, this is one area of economic policy that

the vast majority of Americans of all political persuasions are likely to agree upon.

The ways by which government policies transfer taxpayer funds to the wealthy break down into four basic categories:

Cash and in-kind payments directly to wealthy individuals and companies. The U.S. farm program is the most egregious example of this. Originally designed during the New Deal to assure adequate food supplies to the poor and to help struggling farmers, the farm program hasn't truly served those purposes for decades. The U.S. today is a major food exporter, and farmers as a group are no longer needy. Indeed, according to the Environmental Working Group, which tracks farm subsidies and crop insurance payments, 50 billionaire members of the Forbes 400 got over \$6.3 million in farm subsidies between 1995 and 2014. A report issued by Oklahoma Sen. Tom Coburn in 2011 reveals that 1,617 millionaires received \$16.9 million in farm payments in 2006 alone, an average of more than \$10,000 each going to individuals whose incomes exceeded \$2.5 million that year.

Regulations that favor large companies and investors over smaller, less wealthy ones. An example: Mattel, a toy maker with revenue of \$1.79 billion in 2016, lobbied in support of a 2008 federal regulation that imposed strict compliance standards on materials and processes used to make children's furniture and toys. This regulation, the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act, was justified on the basis of product safety, but the act went well beyond that standard, requiring complex and costly tests and inspections that only big companies like Mattel could afford. It ended up destroying the livelihoods of thousands of at-home small furniture crafts persons and toy makers whose toys and chairs were perfectly safe.

Tax laws and targeted subsidies that favor the rich. Our tax code is riddled with loopholes only the rich can slip through. "Carried interest," for example, is a special tax privilege that allows hedge fund managers and private equity executives to classify the income they receive on

investment gains as low-tax capital gains. Exxon Mobil's 2011 upgrades to its Baton Rouge refinery in Louisiana, for example, are still generating benefits from a \$119-million state subsidy, according to an investigative report in *The Guardian*.

Government policies that provide favors to the rich for which American consumers must pay. The sugar program is the biggest offender in this category. A combination of tariffs, guarantees, and import quotas force the cost of sugar in the United States up to nearly double the world price. As a result, everyone who buys sugar-containing products, from ketchup to candy to bread, pays more, benefiting wealthy sugar growers.

How do these public payoffs to the wealthiest people and companies happen? It's no secret. Special interests line up at the trough in Washington, where the big guys have loud voices. In a recent study, the Sunlight Foundation, a nonprofit that promotes government accountability, found that "between 2007 and 2012, 200 of America's most politically active corporations spent a combined \$5.8 billion on federal lobbying and campaign contributions. Those same corporations got \$4.4 trillion in federal business and support" during those five years, including subsidies, tax breaks and favored government contracts. "After examining 14 million records," Sunlight concluded, "we found that, on average, for every dollar spent on influencing politics, the nation's most politically active corporations received \$760 from the government."

The amount of talent and energy that goes into these efforts is staggering. There are 20 registered lobbyists for each of the 535 members of Congress, and they work hard. The stated rationales for these political maneuvers range from protecting vulnerable family farms to promoting useful industries to enhancing public safety. So rich farmers get more money, wealthy individuals enjoy more arcane tax breaks, and big companies get even bigger subsidies. Meanwhile, middle- and low-income taxpayers get pinched, including entrepreneurs and small businesses that

are being stymied by regulations and tax levies that don't affect the big boys. The process exacerbates income inequality in America, which is both unnecessary and wrong.

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and is an authority on federal and state constitutions. He is the author of "The Truth about Excelsior," a unique perspective on today's cultural madness, and a glimpse into a world of peace, prosperity and freedom.

Holcomb's 'Special' Laws

"It was the legislature that passed the Emergency Management and Disaster law, which gives the governor broad power to take action to protect public health during emergencies. And if a global pandemic that has infected millions of people globally and killed 150,000 in this country in four months' time is not an emergency, what is?" — Nancy Marcus, a Fort Wayne attorney quoted in the July 29 Fort Wayne Journal Gazette as an expert on the U.S. Constitution

(July 30) — Ever since FDR's "switch in time that saved nine," our legal system and law schools have spewed out innumerable constitutional law "experts" who often claim that whatever any government official, agency, bureaucrat or cop can do to people is OK.

They do this by ignoring our short and simple constitutions to unleash an interminable fusillade of judicial pronouncements and federal/state code sections that, by their number of words alone, do seem to overwhelm the few political powers constitutions authorize

Except, of course, to someone who's actually read the laws.

Nobody claims that Gov. Eric Holcomb's Covid-19 mandates were actually authorized by any constitutions, state or federal. The constitutions absolutely forbid executives from making laws. Executive Orders are constitutionally actionable only if they're only the details of executing laws written by legislators.

Other than invoking armed force against insurrection or invasion (which would be as ineffective against a virus as was Caligula's attack on Poseidon), the Governor's only constitutionally authorized emergency power is to call an emergency session of the General Assembly.

To be clear, the constitutions say that what the Governor did and is still doing, is unconstitutional in both word and intent. The Governor cited not the Indiana Constitution, but Indiana Code as his authority, specifically the statute, IC 10-14-3, the "Emergency Management and Disaster Law."

That particular ream of legal effluvium does indeed appear to authorize every possible decree, action or mayhem, if read by itself; and if ignoring all the key principles of separation and limitations of powers in a republic. Ironically, it's even less limited than the federal 40 U.S. Code §1315 invoked against Portland protesters.

But consider what the Indiana Code says about its own authority in the hierarchy of law. What follows is IC 1-1-2 § 1-1-2-1:

"Section 1: The law governing this state is declared to be:

First. The Constitution of the United States and of this state.

Second. All statutes of the general assembly of the state in force, and not inconsistent with such constitutions.

Third. All statutes of the United States in force, and relating to subjects over which congress has power to legislate for the states, and not inconsistent with the Constitution of the United States.

Fourth. The common law of England, and statutes of the British Parliament made in aid thereof prior to the fourth year of the reign of

James the First (except the second section of the sixth chapter of forty-third Elizabeth, the eighth chapter of thirteenth Elizabeth, and the ninth chapter of thirty-seventh Henry the Eighth,) and which are of a general nature, not local to that kingdom, and not inconsistent with the first, second and third specifications of this section.

Please note the order. Last, or fourth, is case law. This is what most U.S. citizens now think comes first. Supreme Court does, in fact, sound supreme. But it's actually dead last in the legal hierarchy that determines what politicians can decree what we can do, can't do, and must do for them.

Third is the federal code. Second, is the Indiana Code, as long as the code doesn't contradict the constitutions, state or federal.

First on the list is, of course, are the constitutions that say only legislators can legislate. The Indiana Constitution's Article I, Section 26 says very clearly says that only the General Assembly (our legislature) has any authority to suspend the laws protecting our rights from politicians under any circumstances. Article I, Section 25 very clearly says that laws cannot create any authority not already granted. And nowhere is the legislature granted authority to delegate away it's power and more local accountability by the stroke of a pen.

The law is clear. Why the Governor refuses to call our legislators to work is not. You'd think he wouldn't want all the protests, disagreements from Sheriffs and Indiana's Attorney General landing on him alone.

Unless, of course, he intentionally crossed this Rubicon and wants to be Caesar.

That's history we really shouldn't want to repeat. ♦



Thomas Hoepker, Sept. 11, 2001

The Outstater

The Pluperfect ‘Citizens’ of Carmel

(Sept. 23) — Carmel is a modern real estate phenomenon with a per capita income twice the national average. This was arguably the result of middle-class families in the 1960s fleeing crime and Indianapolis public schools. Indeed, its population growth exemplifies “white flight,” going from about 1,500 in 1960 to 18,000 two decades later.

In recent years, though, it also has become a diorama for a new ruling class, complete with creepy, lifelike statues of “citizens” scattered about the city in demographically ideal proportion. These conform to a secret wish suspected of such elites, that is, exchanging the current citizenry for one more worthy of their civic efforts.

You might find it similar to the humanoid renderings that architects

put in presentation drawings and models. They project not just bricks and mortar but a new and more perfect social order. These images have evolved from stick figures to individualistic and expressively realistic images of people going about their day as planners might view them from on high — always happy, busy and productive with a “Brave New World” look about them.

Now, of course, they must be diverse as well, and — fitting with our times— divisive.

In Carmel these humanoids have become three-dimensional, showing up about five years ago as colorful full-size figurines placed near public walkways and depicting citizens at work and play in a sort of sculptured Hoosier nirvana. Carmel has a budget of \$1.4 million to dress itself up in this way, all to the delight of the local intelligentsia.

The one in the photograph below, commissioned to provide racial balance in a city that is 84 percent white, cost \$75,000. Alas, it has become a point of contention with black activists,

who say they were not properly consulted in its selection. Among other complaints, the figurine is said to be romanticized, dated and patronizing.

Okay, are they suggesting a scruffier version in a Black Lives Matter T-shirt, say, throwing a Molotov cocktail or looting a CVS? And shouldn’t there be groups of figurines outside City Hall depicting rent-seekers vying for municipal subsidies or a developer calculating cost overruns on a city project. Or how about a working-class Carmel family at a kitchen table trying to pay the mortgage? Or some civic-minded Democrats harvesting mail-in ballots?



Or a public employee reading the fine print on his collective-bargaining contract? Or a hospital administrator inflating COVID deaths for reimbursement. Where, come to think of it, are the figurines lined up outside an abortion clinic?

Finally, there should be a larger-than-life statue of Mayor Jim Brainard so when he has retired to the Gulf of Mexico and all of this soft-headedness collapses in a muddle, Carmel's real-life citizens will have something to topple.

The Good Apparatchik

(Sept. 18) — Is Eric Holcomb in trouble? No, not in danger of losing re-election in what is expected to be a presidential-year GOP romp in Indiana. Rather, in trouble as in falling so far behind the ticket that his political clout and that of his senior staff is suspect.

There is an opinion survey that shows Holcomb dropping 16 points since April. We haven't put much stock in political polls since the invention of the hard-to-profile cell phone. Moreover, in an age of identity politics, respondents don't answer questions straightforwardly.

There are, however, reasons to worry about Holcomb's political health.

Those begin with his "appointee" look. Holcomb was pushed on Hoosiers by the Pence machine, an Indianapolis group that has since moved lock, stock and barrel out of state to a richer market. We are left with the assistant to the deputy director. Do we need to mention the plaid sport jacket and Clubmaster glasses?

Then there is the dead ear. When asked on video what he thought about changing the name of racially insensitive "Indiana," no alarms went off inside a skull full of rehearsed politicisms. He answered the question press-release style trying to mollify the imaginary affronted. It was painful to watch.

Nor has Holcomb's relish for telling us the bad news from Wuhan gone over well. Indeed, for a Republican, his presumption of extraordinary powers has been uncomely. That has included

an illogical and conflicting array of executive orders that restricted churches and taverns but somehow left powerful corporations undisturbed.

Particularly hard to forgive in this office is that Holcomb has wound his way through a political career in Washington and Indianapolis without ever getting a handle on the dynamics of private property. His confusing of Chinese CCP influence for "investment" and his negation of rental contracts were without serious thought about long-term property concerns.

All said, though, Holcomb is nobody's enemy. He is the Lugar-Coats-Daniels-Pence loyalist left standing in a game of political musical chairs — clearly a man of honorable intention, but a man out of place.

The fault? Well, this will sound familiar. Members of Indiana's GOP establishment had a choice in 2016. They could have welcomed a wide-open, vigorous, all-comers, issue-driven primary battle. That, or they could have padded the way for a company man to protect their personal interests and ambitions.

Surprise, they chose the later, to the detriment of their party and of their state.

Violence Comes Home to Roost

"I think this (rioting) is a blind spot for Democrats. I think Democrats are ignoring this problem or hoping that it will go away, and it's not going to go away," he added before arguing the violence needs to be addressed by Biden before the election." — CNN anchor Don Lemon quoted by *The Hill*, Aug. 26, 2020

(Aug. 27) — The recent videos of restaurant customers being surrounded and threatened by protesters appear to be sticking in the collective political conscience. That is not because they are particularly fearsome in themselves — there is more violent riot footage, or, if you prefer, more mostly peaceful protesting.

It's because they are coming home to roost, as the Rev. Jeremiah Wright might say.

Although few of us would purposefully put ourselves in the middle of a 2 a.m. riot in a

burning section of the city, none of us is prepared to quit taking our family out to shop or eat. We are not barricading our homes. Not yet.

In any case, it is not too much to expect assurance from our local political leaders on how they may or may not react. Political mouths here, though, are zipped tight.

For Democrats, it may have been a tactical matter up to this point. The other party is supposed to be the law-and-order party, the protectors of private property.

Exactly, so where have the local Republicans been? Where are they now?

Our governor issued a hand-wringing 3,000-word rehashing of civil-rights history and dreamy aspirations. But the Republican president of our city council hasn't said a word except to remind us of how much he has done for affordable housing. Nor have the other leading Republicans on the city council, several of whom are mayoral hopefuls. Nor has the county GOP chairman.

It is reasonable, though, to call for their position on recent events — events, again, that are at the top of everyone's mind. It is reasonable to want to know what to expect when we take our family out to eat or when we sit on our front porch.

It is called public safety, a huge part of the municipal budget. We deserve specificity.

So, can we expect the restaurant manager to feel confident in calling the police if his patrons are being threatened? Will the police come in sufficient force to disperse a menacing crowd? Can we expect those who refuse to disperse to be arrested? Can we expect those justly charged — all of them — to be prosecuted even if it strains the energy and resources of the local prosecutor's office? Even if it is operationally inconvenient? Is private property an abstract?

Difficult questions, to be sure, but there once were basic civic expectations, for which we paid taxes, for which we assigned authority through the local democratic process.

Are we on our own now?

We need to know that as well. It takes time to arrange for new leadership.

CNN Loves the Gov

“No, that’s not a line from Kamala Harris’ DNC acceptance speech. It’s Indiana’s Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb.” — The Point with Chris Cilizza on CNN, Aug. 20, 2020

(Aug. 20) — With Eric Holcomb assured reelection, Indiana Republicans might spend some time thinking about what the heck they are doing. Why are they spending so much energy and money pushing to the fore a political anachronism?

Holcomb's address this week on “equality and equity,” applauded wildly by everyone from CNN to the state Chamber of Commerce, was full of whiny talking points that could have been penned by a junior speech writer for Lyndon Johnson.

In announcing a new bureaucratic title “Chief Equity, Inclusion and Opportunity Officer,” Holcomb imagines the differences between equality of opportunity and of results can be fudged by a sensitive, reasonable fellow such as himself.

It cannot. One is sacrificed in pursuit of the other. It is an absolute, governor, a founding principle.

The riot-spawning social justice movement, of which Holcomb is now an honorary member, began on Sept. 24, 1965, when President Johnson signed Executive Order No. 11246. It turned affirmative action on its head to guarantee specific, politically defined results. “We seek not just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and equality as a result,” Johnson commanded.

A young editorial writer for the old St. Louis Globe-Democrat was among the first to point out problems with such sweeping moralistic decrees. Pat Buchanan asked some hard questions, prescient ones as they turned out:

- What happens under the order when equality of opportunity fails to produce equality of results?
- What if black Americans dominate America's most richly rewarded sports, while Asians and

whites excel in academic pursuits and on admissions exams at Yale and Harvard?

- Why is it right to discriminate in admissions to prestige colleges against working-class white children from Middle America in favor of urban and middle-class black children?
- Who defines social “justice”?

Five decades later we at least know the answer to Buchanan’s last question. In Indiana, it will be Holcomb’s Chief Equity, Inclusion and Opportunity Officer.

That is demonstrably stupid. “If you cannot achieve equality of performance among people born to the same parents and raised under the same roof,” observed Dr. Thomas Sowell, “how realistic is it to expect to achieve it across broader and deeper social divisions?”

But the devil, it is said, loves an impossible task. Great damage is done by such inscrutable, conflicted directives, not the least of which is to classify citizenship, a historic guarantee of civil strife.

The most immediate damage, though, and the one that should concern Hoosiers these next few years, is that diversity for diversity’s sake will distract us from the actual solvable problems before us.

Heather Mac Donald, a much admired commentator here, would dismiss the governor’s approach as merely conforming to a lie:

“Each diversity initiative, whether in academia or in business, requires pretending that it was not preceded by a long line of identical efforts. Instead, every new diversity campaign starts with penance for the alleged bias that leads schools and corporations to overlook some vast untapped pool of competitively qualified blacks and Hispanics. Now, the pressure to admit and hire on the basis of race will redouble in force, elevating even less skilled candidates to positions of power throughout society. American institutions will pay the price.”

Mac Donald predicts that as a result we will not be addressing why economic and incarceration gaps cannot close without cultural renewal of a sense of personal responsibility.

There will be no change in the attitudes that many children bring to school regarding studying, paying attention in class and respecting teachers. Nobody in authority will acknowledge that the breakdown of the family is resulting in children with too little ability to control their impulses and defer gratification.

There will be only more excuses. “The persistence of inequality will then produce a new round of quotas and self-incrimination — as well as more violence and anger,” she concludes.

Holcomb spent way too much time in Washington.

Death of a Boondoggle

(Aug. 13) — There is a certain type of councilman— you will recognize him once described — who wants to be someone else. Don’t get me wrong, these are men and woman of some accomplishment in their profession. It’s just that . . . well, they’ve always wanted to be a banker, a developer or some other captain of their own ship.

That is a human failing too common to judge. At one time all of us fall into this temptation — hubris, the Greeks called it. When you sit on a city council, though, and your decisions are publicly recorded in some detail over time, the error can become glaringly theatric.

Such was the case last week in Fort Wayne. A touted-to-the-gods downtown urban-renewal project fell flat — and I mean flat on its rear, a pratfall.

In two years, the project had grown to \$280 million by the final contract extension. That included promises of over \$60 million from the state, \$60 million from federal tax credit programs, \$62 million from local government as well as \$62 million in preferential loans with the remainder to be provided by equity investors.

Stop me if you know the punch line, but “equity investor” is code for people willing to spend their own money. In this case, they were ghosts; they never materialized. Or if they were actual, they were somewhere else investing in

projects not the vision of full-of-themselves politicians.

The five contract extensions were only the developers' way of buying time until local government could be convinced to put in more cash — \$30 million more, to be exact. But to the city administration's undying credit, the plug was finally pulled. That could make Fort Wayne one of the rare cities that avoids the tragic nonsense of subsidized economic development, or "eco-devo" to the savvy insider.

It all should be seen as warning to cities throughout Indiana that such decisions are best made by those with their own resources at risk. It's called free-market capitalism.

But that is only the first part of the story. There is a second part. It's called hubris-fueled nemesis.

One might have hoped that such a failure, after three years of official mulling, would be cause for agonizing reappraisal. That would be especially so when a contrary argument had been made all those years by knowledgeable critics, including an ex-banker sitting on the redevelopment commission, Jason Arp.

And this week, Councilman Arp had the last word, shaming a media and a council that failed to do their job of protecting the interests of citizens:

"The media tried to steer events to the prescribed outcome rather than observing and reporting, rather than informing the public that there were serious doubts about Electric Works from the very beginning. Instead, they tried to coax officials to just try a little harder (i.e. spend a little bit more of the public's money). Anyone with open eyes would have seen that this project was questionable from the weeks before the first hearings were held."

But instead of reappraisal, the next-day headline in the Fort Wayne Journal Gazette reflected the editors' "shock" over the project's demise. Theirs was a newspaper, please know, that only a few weeks earlier had boosted the project as moving along swimmingly. Eight members of council piled on, writing a letter expressing their surprise and demanding more

"transparency." These were councilmen who had joined the newspaper in squelching every concern.

Expressions of surprise and calls for transparency duly noted, in summary it is worth reviewing an early council discussion with the Electric Works developers (Feb. 27, 2018). As you read it, keep in mind that the council members cast a rousing 7-2 vote of confidence in the project immediately afterward.

Councilman Arp — "We are going to spend \$444 million from different sources — federal, state, city — but we are going to end up building something with construction costs that are \$440 million that is worth \$150 million?"

2nd Developer — "Hence the public-private partnership . . ."

Councilman Arp — "So we are potentially paying three times what this is worth."

1st Developer — "Well, that \$15-square-foot rent, which is what your analysis is based on, is the rent we are starting at in terms of what our base rents will be, so . . ."

Councilman Arp — "Yes, but a 6 percent discount rate is pretty generous and a 50 percent operating margin. You are getting the benefit of the doubt on these numbers."

1st Developer — "OK . . . but councilman, we would be happy to sit down (outside of council chambers) and go over the pro forma with you."

Councilman Arp — "Great, but how much of a development fee are we looking at?"

2nd Developer — "The development fee is at market or about 10 percent."

Councilman Arp — "About 15 to 16 million dollars?"

2nd Developer — "Correct."

Councilman Arp — "How much equity are you putting in up front?"

2nd Developer — "The total is . . . about \$18 million."

Councilman Arp — "So substantially all of it (the 'investment') gets repaid in a development fee at closing (before the project begins)."

Uncivil Battlefields

“Every record has been destroyed or falsified, every book rewritten, every picture has been repainted, every statue and street building has been renamed, every date has been altered. And the process is continuing day by day and minute by minute. History has stopped. Nothing exists except an endless present in which the Party is always right.” — George Orwell, “1984”

(Aug. 8) — I had the impression during my time on Capitol Hill, a supposed center of representative government, that there was much that went on of which only one or two people were aware — important things meant to change the historical record.

One experience always comes to mind. It was a hearing in the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (Joe Biden was there, not much more cogent than he is now). A couple of farmers from El Salvador were testifying in Spanish supposedly in favor of a bill to withhold aid until Communist demands there were met.

A policy aide at the hearing who spoke Spanish whispered that the farmers weren’t saying what they were supposed to say. They were saying instead that they wanted the aid to continue so they could plant that year’s crop.

Later, the entry in the Congressional Record was checked and the testimony had been changed to support the bill — an official lie. My friend pointed this out to Richard Lugar who said in effect, forget it. The Democrats would merely bring in more Salvadorian farmers at taxpayer expense to deliver the “correct” testimony. At that point it became an official, bipartisan lie.

That’s the deal in Washington. It’s why Republicans always lose. Democrats believe in their issues and are unabashedly willing to push them through no matter what, and as often as it takes. Republicans give up on the first roll call and retire to a self-satisfied happy hour at the Capitol Grille.

That is not fair to individual congressmen but it is the impression.

Another example crossed my desk last week. The U.S. House passed one of those omnibus monsters, this one ostensibly to fund the Department of State for the coming year but also foreign operations, agriculture, rural development, interior, environment, military construction and veterans affairs. Buried near the bottom of all that was this sentence:

“Notwithstanding any other provision of law or policy to the contrary, within 180 days of enactment of this Act, the National Park Service shall remove from display all physical Confederate commemorative works, such as statues, monuments, sculptures, memorials, and plaques.”

To my knowledge, no member of Indiana’s congressional delegation warned us about this, despite the state having four Civil War battlefields. Perhaps that is for fear of being labeled, although absurdly, a Confederate sympathizer. Or maybe they are just counting on the Senate to quietly clean things up. In any case, nobody has been forced to defend that sentence or even admit authorship.

So we’ll have to tell you what it means.

A visit to any of the Civil War battlefields will be rendered nonsensical. There will be no indication of Confederate movements and deployment. You won’t be able to imagine Stonewall Jackson under heavy Union assault on Henry House Hill or his maneuver during the Valley Campaign. You will be looking at simple fields, fence rows and tree lines — nothing more.

Who thinks that’s a good idea? The same people who adulterate testimony taken under oath, people determined to subvert honest democratic discussion to dictate policy and morality to the rest of us.

But who thinks it’s a bad idea? Nobody knows. Again, there have been no Republican objections to this section, although it is assumed all voted against passage of the larger Democrat-inflated appropriations.

The voice of sanity on this issue comes oddly enough from the New York Times. Elliott

Ackerman, a combat veteran now a columnist for the Times, recently wrote: “An area of our complex past that should be left untouched are battlefields. Blood consecrates a battlefield, and it is never the blood of only one side.”

But nothing in Washington is so sacred it can’t be touched by someone, too often by someone nameless.

Give Toynbee a Seat at Council

(Aug. 6) — Post-riot life in our town is divided into the factions that a historian predicted more than 70 years ago, and we will be lucky to survive when they finally clash.

Granted, nobody reads Arnold Toynbee any more. He is a bit thick, as British scholars tend to be, but his 10-volume magisterial study of the rise and fall of more than 60 civilizations put him on the cover of Time Magazine.

In short, he knows stuff. Here are some of Toynbee’s observations that you may recognize in your community:

- A “dominant minority,” a smart set that today might be made up of the heads of the interstate corporations, hospitals and other institutions, charities, the local media, political parties and government agencies. Toynbee says they follow an earlier “creative minority,” the men and women responsible for dynamic growth.
- The trouble comes when this dominant minority is faced with new challenges that do not yield to old techniques — problems that cannot be solved by mimic, posture or title.
- Next, the yardsticks by which the community once measured approved behavior are abandoned. Anything goes — public obscenity, promiscuity, desecration of monuments, kneeling during the national anthem, facial tattoos, body piercing, etc., (I am using contemporary examples here).
- Then the dominant minority attempts to placate or even emulate a threatening underclass rather than set an example for it. The urbane Dick Lugar, for example, would don

flannel shirts and rural attire as his election cycle came around.

- Finally comes a “lapse into truancy,” meaning a rejection of the obligations of citizenship, including (my examples again) lax law enforcement, prolific public spending, malfeasance, cronyism, politicized prosecution and the degeneration of individual rights, particularly property and speech, all marking the beginning of an observable decline.

In my town, radical chic now prevails at the better dinner parties. That means nobody calls any kind of dress “cheap” or “sleazy.” Indeed, only the most politically select kinds of behavior prompt any disapproval whatsoever. The sociologist Charles Murray, writing on Toynbee, called this “ecumenical niceness,” its chief tenet being an unwillingness to judge the proletariat, even in its laggard or criminal elements.

The nominally Republican city council is hyper-sensitive to the policy prescriptions of a social-justice bloc. The bloc recently pushed through a law requiring police to wear body cameras even though the department already had plans for that and there were no credible reports of police brutality.

Posture, you see, is everything. The GOP county chairman last month endorsed a virtual Democrat (she donated to the Bernie Sanders campaign) — an attempt, one supposes, at an ecumenically nicety.

It could be predicted from all of this that the smart set would circulate a Politico article dissing the celebration of their town’s namesake, Gen. Anthony Wayne. A casual reading gives the impression that the celebration was the provincial ritual of white Midwestern rubes, if not racists.

The article followed the lead of the New York Times “1619 Project,” leaning heavily on journalistic group think and only lightly on historic analysis. The point seemed to be that the writer, although growing up in Indiana, was in tune with a cosmopolitan zeitgeist while the poor

devils stuck back home were hopelessly out of touch and in need of instruction.

The uninstructed, of course, would be the workaday citizens and families who take dumb pride in their town and its history. But they will be the ones — not the dominant minority, not the criminal proles and not a big-shot writer for Politico — who will decide the next civic election. It is they who have the power to bring this rolling wokeness to a halt and replace a failed dominant minority with a creative one.

Will they? None in the ruling class seems worried about that prospect. Their public stance continues to conform to Toynbee's tragic model. And if there is a silent majority here it is not letting a pin drop.

But Murray adds that if America's elites are being proletarianized and our civilization is in fact in decline, the proof will be found in those things that are no longer taken for granted.

Well, precious few things remain that can be taken for granted. And on top of it all is Toynbee's warning that disintegrating civilizations can always be recognized by their "riven culture."

In our town, riving is all around us. We can only hope that the electorate has had enough of it.

'Black' and 'white' and Troubled All Over

"There are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns — the ones we don't know we don't know." — Former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld answering a question at a 2002 press briefing

(July 31) — At a certain age you should be getting used to the generation gap, overlapping generation gaps in fact. But it still catches you by surprise some days — not only the disparity but the wanton abandonment of proven ways for no other reason than they are proven ways.

For instance, some of us can no longer credibly call ourselves journalist; we no longer have a clue as to what is happening in the modern newsroom.

This was brought home rather cruelly in a discussion with a youngish journo (that's what they call themselves these days). There was surprise at my suggestion to reinstate what I thought was a routine prescription for any well-run newsroom — a strong copy desk.

That is a desk with the power to reject poorly thought out articles and to require reporters to answer pointed questions about untenable aspects of a story, all in addition to having ultimate authority to edit for grammar, style and spelling and then write a headline and place it in the layout as per the publisher's sense of context and priority.

They used to call it the Bull Pen, but no longer — for reasons that should be obvious.

All of that, the youngish journo made clear, was a squashing of journalistic creativity, of what brings joy to a story, of what makes news bright and interesting, of what encourages the spark of enterprise, and so on.

The generation gap in this instance was of such expanse I cannot fairly say that either of us understood the other's point. Mine was that the absence of the Bull Pen had ushered journalism's decline, as recorded by Gay Talese in "The Kingdom and the Power," the classic 1969 memoir of his days at the New York Times.

Old fogeyish enough for you?

Also, the discussion brought into focus why I am having trouble understanding changes in the Associated Press Stylebook, which, in my has-been fashion, I have refused to update since it started getting woke in the late 1960s.

It wasn't too much longer before the AP prohibited the use of "illegal immigrant" to describe immigrants who were here illegally or "Islamist" to describe attacks that were done in the name of Islam. The AP explained that the terms were dehumanizing. The AP Stylebook, you see, had gone to war with the core purpose of journalism, i.e., to accurately describe what its reporters can see and hear.

Now the AP has made it the rule to capitalize “Black” but not capitalize “white.” A spokesman patiently explained the reason to the uninitiated:

“White people generally do not share the same history and culture, or the experience of being discriminated against because of skin color . . . capitalizing the term white, as is done by white supremacists, risks subtly conveying legitimacy to such beliefs.”

Those are strange words to anyone who has studied this nation’s Anglo-Saxon underpinnings. The neat thing about early England was the successful blending (in battle or negotiation) of the Norse, Welch, Briton, Norman and others into a single people. It is why we have the rich and descriptive language of a Shakespeare and how we quarreled our way to the idea that even kings should obey the law — our exceptionalism, in other words, whether we are Black or white.

That said, and having been labeled “ruddy” on my U.S. Navy ID card, I don’t describe people by their superficial appearance — unless, of course, they are homicidal and running at large, a distinction that the AP Stylebook refuses to make for fear of offending the at-large homicidal.

No matter, as I said, after 55 years I am giving up on journalism as a legitimate discipline. Instead, I would like to be known professionally as a “defenestrator,” someone who in the manner of King James II and the unfortunate 8th Earl of Douglas throws imposters out of upper-story windows.

My new title cannot be taken away because it predates 1619, when modern journalism began its recording of our history. And no, it is not capitalized. — *tcl*

Disparities and Totalitarianism

A group is a group. It has characteristics. Those characteristics matter for whether you play in the NBA. They matter for whether you learn to master the violin or the piano. They matter for whether you pursue technical subjects or choose to become a humanist or a scientist. They matter for the food that you eat. They matter for how many children you raise and how you raise them. They matter as to the age when you first have sex. They matter for all those things, and I think everyone would agree with that.

But now you’re telling me that they don’t matter for who becomes a partner in a law firm? They don’t matter for who becomes a chair in the Philosophy Department somewhere? Groupness implies disparity because groupness, if taken seriously, implies differences in ways of living life. Not everybody wants to play the fiddle. Not everybody wants to dunk a basketball. Not everybody is frightened to death that their parents are going to be disappointed with them if they come home with an A-minus. Not everybody is susceptible to being swayed into a social alienation that requires them to commit a violent crime in order to prove their bona fides.

Groups differ. Groups are not evenly distributed across society. That’s inevitable. If you insist that those be attended, you’re only going to be able to succeed by imposing a totalitarian regime that monitors everything and jiggers everything, recomputing and regurgitating things until we’ve got the same number of blacks in proportion to their population and the same number of second-generation Vietnamese immigrants in proportion to their population being admitted to Caltech or the Bronx High School of Science. I don’t want to live in that world.

— Mark Perry, July 25, 2020, *the American Enterprise Institute*



"The Battle of Cowpens," painted by William Ranney in 1845, shows an unnamed patriot (far left) saving the life of Col. William Washington.