

Brandon McGinley: Mennonite in America

ALLOTT & DORAN: WITH SYRIA'S CHRISTIANS

**MILLER ON
JOHN WAYNE**

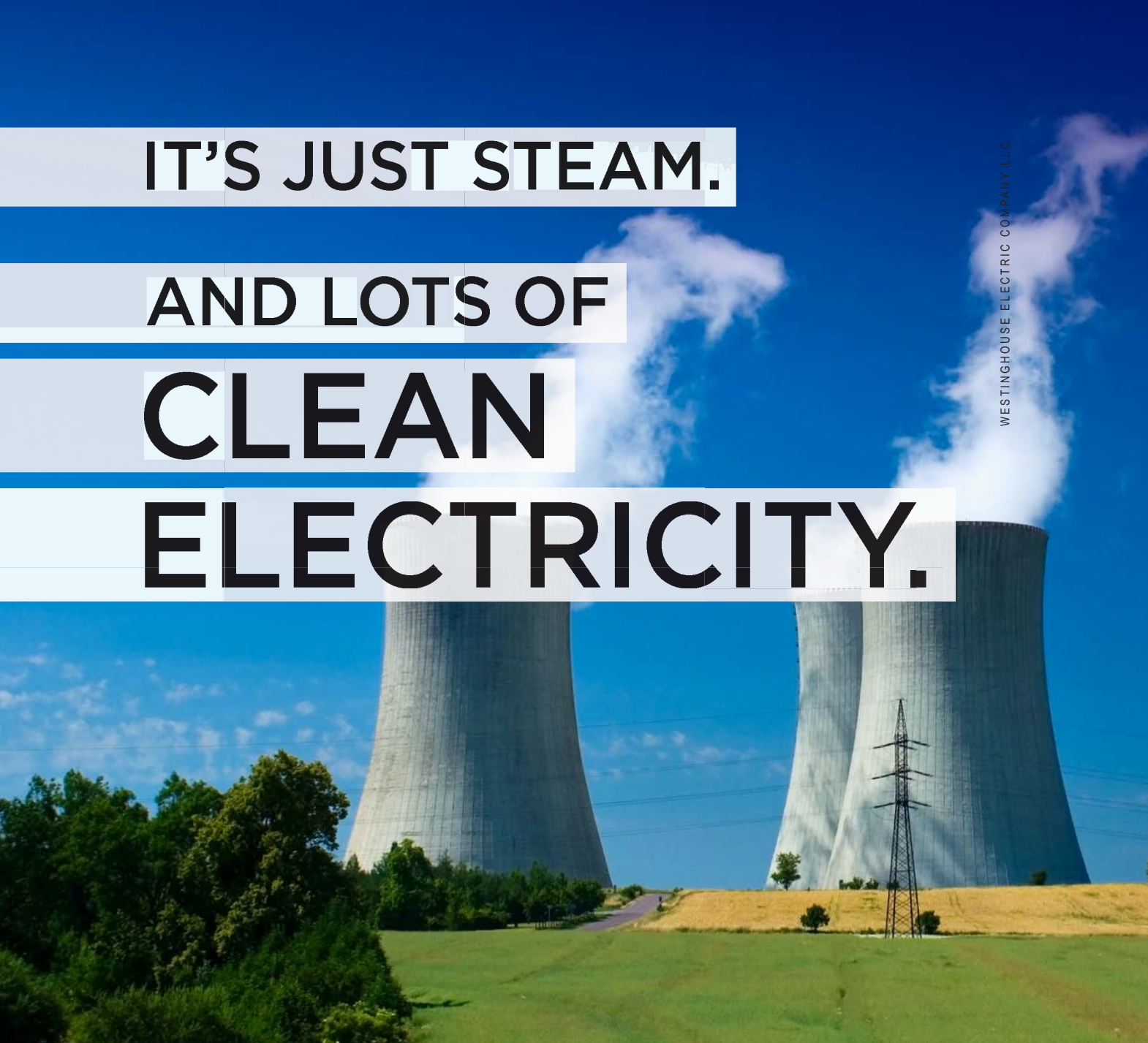
**PRYCE-JONES ON
GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ**

NATIONAL REVIEW



**Scott Winship on the
'New Marxism'**



A photograph of two large, grey, hyperboloid cooling towers of a nuclear power plant. They are emitting thick white plumes of steam that rise into a clear blue sky with some light clouds. In the foreground, there is a green grassy field, a line of trees on the left, and a yellow field on the right. A tall electrical transmission tower stands between the two cooling towers.

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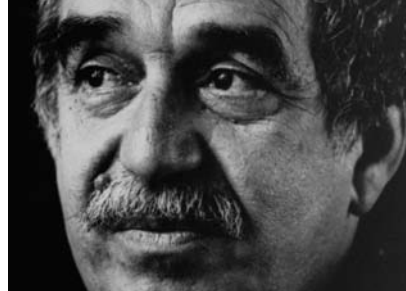
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Contents

NATIONAL REVIEW

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David Pryce-Jones on
Gabriel García Márquez
p. 28

ON THE COVER Page 31

Inequality and the Fate of Capitalism

Thomas Piketty knows that big thinkers before him—Marx, but also Thomas Malthus and David Ricardo—have been proved badly wrong by their predictions of capitalism's ultimate demise. He has written a landmark work describing the past, but in proving unable to resist predictions about the future, he has exposed himself and his new friends on the American left to future ridicule.

Scott Winship



COVER: THOMAS REIS

ARTICLES

16 NOTICE NOT OBAMACARE by Ramesh Ponnuru
Why the president wants you to look away from the details of his policy.

20 USING RACE by Kevin D. Williamson
For the Left, racism is and always has been a tool.

21 LIBERAL SLUMLORDS by Reihan Salam
Policies that enable them; policies that wouldn't.

22 PUBLIC-LAND COLONIALISM by Travis Kavulla
Of Cliven Bundy and the Bureau of Land Management.

26 PIPELINES, WIND FARMS, AND GODS by Jay Nordlinger
A snapshot of our energy debate from rural Nebraska.

28 POET OF SELF-PITY by David Pryce-Jones
The baleful influence of Gabriel García Márquez.

FEATURES

31 INEQUALITY AND THE FATE OF CAPITALISM by Scott Winship
An impressive work of scholarship invokes a dubious idea from Marx.

34 OBAMACARE AMONG THE MENNONITES by Brandon McGinley
They can conscientiously object to war, so why not the HHS mandate?

36 INTO SYRIA, OUT OF SYRIA by Jordan Allott and Andrew Doran
A report from among the persecuted.

BOOKS, ARTS & MANNERS

41 THE EVOLUTION OF MARRIAGE
Ryan T. Anderson reviews *Marriage and Civilization: How Monogamy Made Us Human*, by William Tucker.

43 ALL-AMERICAN
John J. Miller reviews *John Wayne: The Life and Legend*, by Scott Eyman.

44 A NIGHT AT THE IMPROV
Steven F. Hayward reviews *The Triumph of Improvisation: Gorbachev's Adaptability, Reagan's Engagement, and the End of the Cold War*, by James Graham Wilson.

48 OLD SCHOOL
Charlotte Hays reviews *The Curmudgeon's Guide to Getting Ahead: Dos and Don'ts of Right Behavior, Tough Thinking, Clear Writing, and Living a Good Life*, by Charles Murray.

50 FILM: SISTER FROM ANOTHER PLANET
Ross Douthat reviews *Under the Skin*.

51 INTO THE WOODS
Richard Brookhiser discusses trees.

SECTIONS

2 Letters to the Editor
4 The Week
39 Athwart James Lileks
40 The Long View Rob Long
45 Poetry William W. Runyeon
52 Happy Warrior Daniel Foster

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Letters



Courses to Success

A professor in college once told me that the first step in choosing your career is deciding whether you prefer to spend your life working with people, things, or ideas. I agree with Charles C. W. Cooke that college is not for everyone, especially those who like to work with things. Yet his article "Drop the 'Dropout'" (April 21) contains two flaws. First, he cites only one piece of anecdotal evidence that "credential-based snobbery" is widespread among Americans, the *PoliticsUSA* headline about Governor Scott Walker. Therefore, he creates a "straw-man argument" based on the fallacy of inductive reasoning. The only people I ever meet who display this kind of credential snobbery are insecure degree-holders who are not sure if they are smart. On the contrary, I sense a widespread sentiment, even among educated colleagues, that America needs a skilled work force with more plumbers, electricians, and mechanics.

Second, his argument seems to assume that the only purpose of a college education is to acquire a high-paying job leading to success in a material sense. No one denies that the world is filled with highly creative, successful college dropouts. Yet I argue that a college education can "lead to a better life" even for carpenters or factory workers. A true liberal-arts education creates a love of learning for its own sake. Both my parents were high-school dropouts. Yet my love of knowledge was stimulated in college by some great professors, to whom I owe a debt of gratitude. They exposed me to great thinkers and ideas in economics, history, theology, psychology, and sociology, the subjects in which I took most of my courses. I didn't graduate with any "practical skills." Yet a love for reading created by exposure to great ideas gave me the impetus to develop writing skills and become, first, a journalist, and later in life a successful author and professor. The opportunity to attend college was among the best things that ever happened to me.

*David E. Sumner, Professor of Journalism
Ball State University
Muncie, Ind.*

CHARLES C. W. COOKE RESPONDS: If there is indeed "a widespread sentiment, even among educated colleagues, that America needs a skilled work force with more plumbers, electricians, and mechanics," it is certainly not being conveyed to the nation's young. The United States is approaching \$1 trillion in student debt; the unwavering rhetoric of the political class is that everybody who wants to go to college should go to college; and yet, on the one occasion when the president managed to make the case in public that "folks can make a lot more, potentially, with skilled manufacturing or the trades than they might with an art-history degree," he was forced to apologize after a professor in that subject objected.

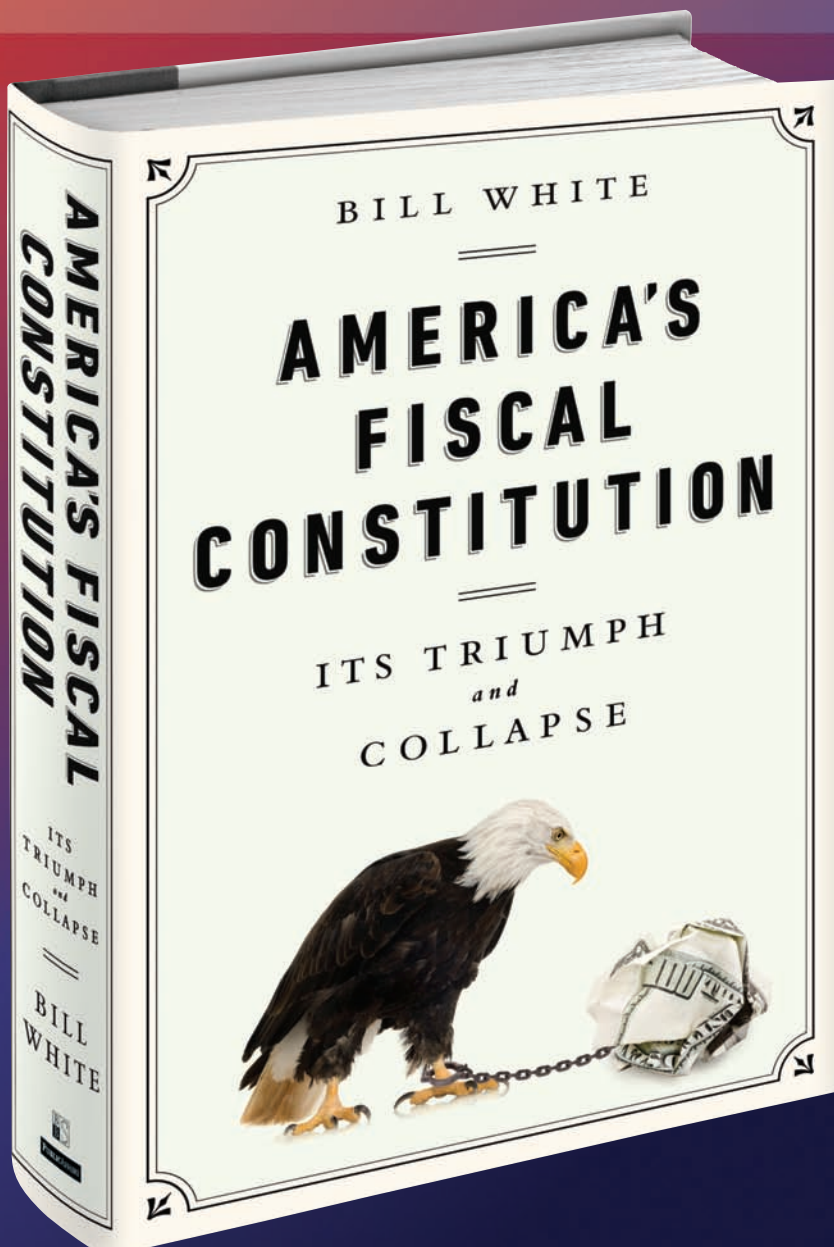
Providing that one's teachers are useful, being exposed to "great thinkers and ideas in economics, history, theology, psychology, and sociology" is certainly worthwhile. Nevertheless, the system is not set up for dilettantes; it is set up to create "the work force of tomorrow," or whatever other hollow platitude is regnant at the moment. Perhaps the most notable thing about the Occupy Wall Street movement was its complaint that so many had been through college but could not now find a job. Where do we think they got the idea that such a job would be forthcoming?

Letters may be submitted by e-mail to letters@nationalreview.com.

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PUBLICAFFAIRS

The Week

■ The latest scandal lesson: When you're talking to a mistress a quarter your age, be sure to be decorous.

■ Speaker John Boehner said that the reason his House Republican colleagues have not acted on immigration is that too many of them do not want to take tough votes and are instead taking "the path of least resistance." If backing what Washington, D.C., calls "reform" is politically difficult, though, it is because many voters oppose it. They are right to do so. The bill the Senate passed legalizes illegal immigrants before we can be sure that the law will be enforced against new illegal entrants, recklessly raises low-skilled immigration, and establishes guest-worker programs that would create a class of laborers without the full rights of Americans. If Boehner will not lead the way to better legislation—which has to start by killing the elite dream that the Senate bill represents—then we suppose a second-best alternative is for him to complain ineffectually while a bad bill slowly expires.

■ According to a series of recordings collected by *Mother Jones*, Rand Paul, back when he was a potential Senate candidate trying to differentiate himself from the Republican establishment and invigorate his father's youthful supporters, told lots of audiences that Republicans can't be trusted to be fiscally responsible, because Jimmy Carter was more responsible than Ronald Reagan. His comments were riddled with inaccuracies: Reagan did not, for example, increase domestic discretionary spending faster than Carter, as Paul suggests. (Increased defense spending, tax cuts, and the decline in inflation had more to do with Reagan-era deficits.) We are pretty sure that Reagan would himself concede that spending grew too fast under his administration, as during the last few decades generally. We don't fault the senator for criticizing Reagan's record. For praising Carter's, on the other hand . . .

■ The Obama administration has once more delayed the Keystone XL pipeline, burying the announcement on Good Friday while attempting to wash its hands of the matter until after the midterm elections. The *Washington Post* called the administration's justification for the latest delay "laughable"—it involves some low-level litigation in Nebraska over the specific route of the pipeline—and noted: "If foot-dragging were a competitive sport, President Obama and his administration would be world champions." The Obama administration, caught between an environmental movement that wants to increase scarcity and a broader electorate that prefers not to be artificially impoverished, has been temporizing on the issue for as long as Mr. Obama has been president. That President Obama does not have sufficient conviction to stand up for simple abundance says a great deal about the man who imagines himself to be a post-ideological pragmatist.



■ MSNBC host Chris Hayes, in a recent column in *The Nation*, likens his ambition to abolish fossil fuels to the abolition of slavery. While he hastens to point out that he's not making a "moral comparison between the enslavement of Africans and African Americans and the burning of carbon to power our devices," Hayes nevertheless seems to think the only losers in a fossil-fuels ban would be "the world's most profitable corporations and the nations that partner with them," who are naturally analogous to antebellum slave owners. He needs to check in with the International Energy Agency, which reports that fossil fuels meet more than 80 percent of the world's energy needs, and all windmills, solar panels, geothermal plants, and other forms of "clean" energy meet just 1 percent. Even if they could maintain an implausibly high growth rate indefinitely, these other forms of energy would not replace fossil fuels for more than half a century. By any yardstick, fossil fuels have been a Promethean gift to humanity. It's not a coincidence that the human population has increased sevenfold since the invention of the continuous-rotation steam engine or that the internal-combustion age has seen the development of transnational markets for food, widespread travel and education, human aviation, full-time employment for left-wing commentators, and even the abolition of slavery. Hayes is wrong to



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downplay the moral comparison. There is a very moral argument involved in his abolition scheme; he's just on the wrong side of it.

■ Cliven Bundy spoiled the tail end of his 15 minutes with a rancid little meditation on how blacks might have been better off as slaves. Almost instantly his highest-profile conservative champions dumped him, and the Left pronounced itself unsurprised that a hero of the Right should turn out to be a racist. But many conservatives never embraced the rancher, who makes wholly fanciful claims about the federal government's not owning the land where his cattle graze. That said, the complaints about the Bureau of Land Management that helped create some of the sympathy for him (see Travis Kavulla, page 22) stand regardless of his social views—about which we fervently hope never to hear again.

■ A case argued before the Supreme Court in April involved the question of whether the state may decide what constitutes a “falsehood.” In *Susan B. Anthony List v. Driehaus*, two anti-abortion groups challenged an Ohio statute that threatened to see them prosecuted for making “false statements” during an election in 2010. The false statement, that Representative Steve Driehaus's vote for Obamacare constituted a vote for abortion subsidies, was actually true, which illustrates some of the dangers of this sort of law. The plaintiffs argued that the First Amendment does not grant the government the power to establish the truth and preserve it in aspic, nor to punish political players who allegedly err. The court appeared to be sympathetic to the claim, Antonin Scalia invoking George Orwell's Ministry of Truth, Samuel Alito suggesting that “arguably there's a great chilling of core First Amendment speech,” and Stephen Breyer, usually a friend of restrictions on expression, asking rhetorically, “What's the harm? I can't speak; that's the harm.” There being a question as to whether they have standing, the first hurdle is for the litigants to convince the Court that they can bring the case at all. If they can, and it is examined on the merits, the law looks to be on the way out. In our country, it's the voters themselves who must decide what they consider true and false.

■ Early in the Obama administration, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan let states out of the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act if they agreed to move forward with Duncan's preferred education reforms—an eyebrow-raising way around the limits on federal authority over the nation's schools. Now he has taken the next logical step, revoking Washington State's waiver after its legislature disappointed him, and threatening three other states. This is not the way the federal government should be relating to the



AP PHOTO/DREW ANGERER

states, let alone the way a single functionary should be. Obama's cabinet sometimes seems to be an extended exercise in one-upmanship in undermining the constitutional order.

■ While we favor robust use of executive-clemency powers and an end to the war on drugs, we cannot endorse using the former as a means to the latter. The administration is using those powers to reduce what it regards as excessively harsh sentences for drug-related crimes. Those sentences may indeed be too harsh. The clemency powers exist, however, to rectify individual cases of injustice. Using them to rewrite the laws to the administration's liking is an abuse.

■ Senators Tim Johnson (D., S.Dak.) and Mike Crapo (R., Idaho) have a bill to dissolve and replace Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, and it looks like it has a chance of passing. That is, unfortunately, as good an indication as any that it isn't a solution. It would replace the two government-sponsored enterprises, which repackage mortgages and sell them as securities in order to lower the price of loans, with a single entity, an insurer called the Federal Mortgage Insurance Corporation. While the insurer would place some risk on private investors, it would play much the same role Fannie and Freddie do, just less obtrusively. The losses it could impose on private investors could be waived in the event of a financial crisis, meaning taxpayers will be exposed precisely when risks are highest. The federal government ought to get out of the mortgage industry altogether, and mortgages ought to be as expensive as the market dictates. Johnson-Crapo wouldn't do much to accomplish that goal.

■ Over the past several years, the Phoenix Veterans Affairs hospital system shunted more than a thousand veterans trying to get appointments onto a secret waiting list, allowing the system to hit various performance goals while vets died waiting for appointments. The scandal, and revelations about similar practices at other VA facilities, ought to be a reminder that it is immensely risky to trust the government with health care, and that we don't pay nearly enough attention to whether it's working for vets. The VA's overall health outcomes are adequate, but it is fundamentally unaccountable to its beneficiaries. Senator Marco Rubio (R., Fla.) and Representative Jeff Miller (R., Fla.) have proposed a bill that would enable the secretary of veterans affairs to fire senior bureaucrats; now, instead of pink slips, they get bonuses for gaming the statistics. The department's unaccountability is also why there is a huge backlog of disability applications: Hundreds of thousands of vets are trying to navigate an unnecessarily complicated system to get their benefits, with no help from the VA. If veterans are to get their health care from a government-run system, it ought to be the best government program in America. It certainly isn't.

■ In April, Georgia's governor signed a bill that would bring the state into line with much of the rest of the country, by allowing permit-holders to carry guns in the unsecured areas of airports, abolishing the state's gun-sales-record system, and permitting churches and bars to decide whether their patrons may be armed. The country's assorted gun-control groups lambasted the measure as “extreme,” while the *Washington Post's* E. J. Dionne

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described Georgians as “gun supremacists” who had gone “stark raving mad.” Since the late 1980s, Americans’ right to keep and bear arms has undergone a veritable revolution, with advocates racking up legal, political, and cultural victories as if they were going out of style. Each and every time a loosening of the laws has been proposed, critics have suggested that it will yield a return to the lawlessness of the “Wild West.” This hasn’t happened. Instead, Americans have seen a dramatic drop in gun crime and a cutting in half of the murder rate. The dire predictions never come true, and the gun controllers never learn from their failure to come true.

■ Azusa Pacific University might be the place that Beach Boys member Brian Wilson and Jan Berry of Jan and Dean had in mind when composing “Surf City”—a sunny Southern California location with, according to *U.S. News*’s statistics, “two girls for every boy,” in the words of the song. The polymathic Charles Murray was invited to speak there, and after the usual sort of intellectually shallow protests to which Murray has no doubt become accustomed since publishing *The Bell Curve*, Azusa “delayed” his talk, which is the university’s cowardly way of disinviting the scholar. Murray published a blunt open letter to Azusa’s students: “Azusa Pacific’s admin-

Gas Power

VLADIMIR PUTIN has an unappreciated ally in his aggression against Ukraine: Western environmentalism. Europe collectively has little will to stand up to him, in part because Europe has given Russia the key to its economy—its energy supply.

Europe has moved toward reliance on greener energy, and substituted natural gas for oil, coal, and even nuclear power. George W. Bush saw the risks of this approach, aggressively criticizing Russia for using energy as a sword and urging Europeans to diversify their energy sources. Last summer, a Congressional Research Service report contrasted Mr. Bush’s approach with President Obama’s presumably more enlightened style: “The Obama Administration has also called for diversification, but has refrained from openly expressing concerns about Russia’s regional energy policy, perhaps in order to avoid jeopardizing relations with Moscow.”

Over the past two decades, EU countries have nonetheless increasingly relied on imports of natural gas. Because of climate-change concerns, their domestic production of coal has more than halved. While domestic production of natural gas in the EU in 2011 was actually below its level in 1990, consumption and imports doubled between 1995 and 2011. EU members in 2012 imported 65 percent of their energy and 64 percent of their natural gas. Since carbon emissions from natural gas are relatively low, and sentiment against fracking within its borders is so high, the EU has plans to increase future reliance, projecting an 80 percent import share of natural gas by 2030.

Russia, with the largest natural-gas reserves on earth, fully 18 percent of the global total, currently accounts for 34 percent of EU gas imports. This number, as can be seen in the nearby chart, understates Russian leverage, because many countries in Eastern Europe find themselves practical wards of a Russian monopolist.

Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Estonia, and Finland import 100 percent of their gas from Russia. In these countries, about 20 percent of total national energy use on average comes from Russian gas. Farther west, other European countries are less reliant on Russian natural gas, but it still plays a significant role in the energy markets of such coun-

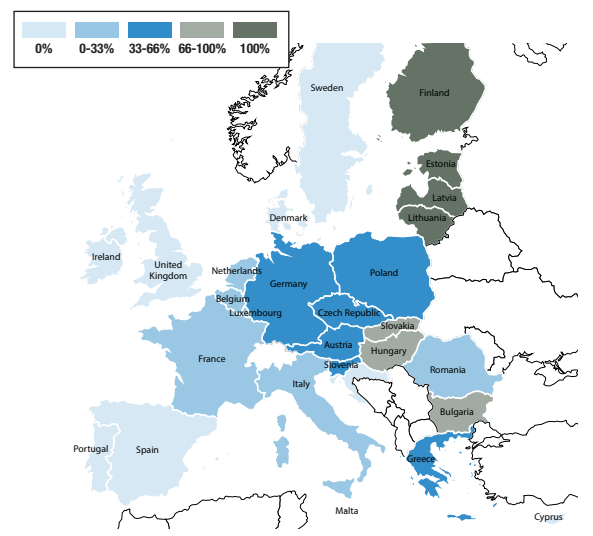
tries as Austria, Belgium, Germany, and the Czech Republic. In each of these countries, Russian natural gas accounts for over 10 percent of total energy consumption.

This problem creates an important asymmetry. If Russia stops selling gas, it can always start selling it again tomorrow, perhaps at a higher price. But take away 20 percent of a country’s energy supply overnight, and you are looking at a depression-level economic collapse.

As we look ahead to the endgame of the Ukraine crisis, nations of the West need to aggressively pursue other energy options for Europe. Expanded production of liquefied natural gas, reversal of Germany’s decision to close its nuclear-power plants, and expanded use of domestic coal and natural gas are necessary if Putin’s leverage is to be reduced. The alternative will be a 21st-century game of dominoes, with Putin seeing little European opposition.

—KEVIN A. HASSETT

Percentage of Natural-Gas Consumption from Russian Imports



SOURCE: EUROGAS AND THE CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE

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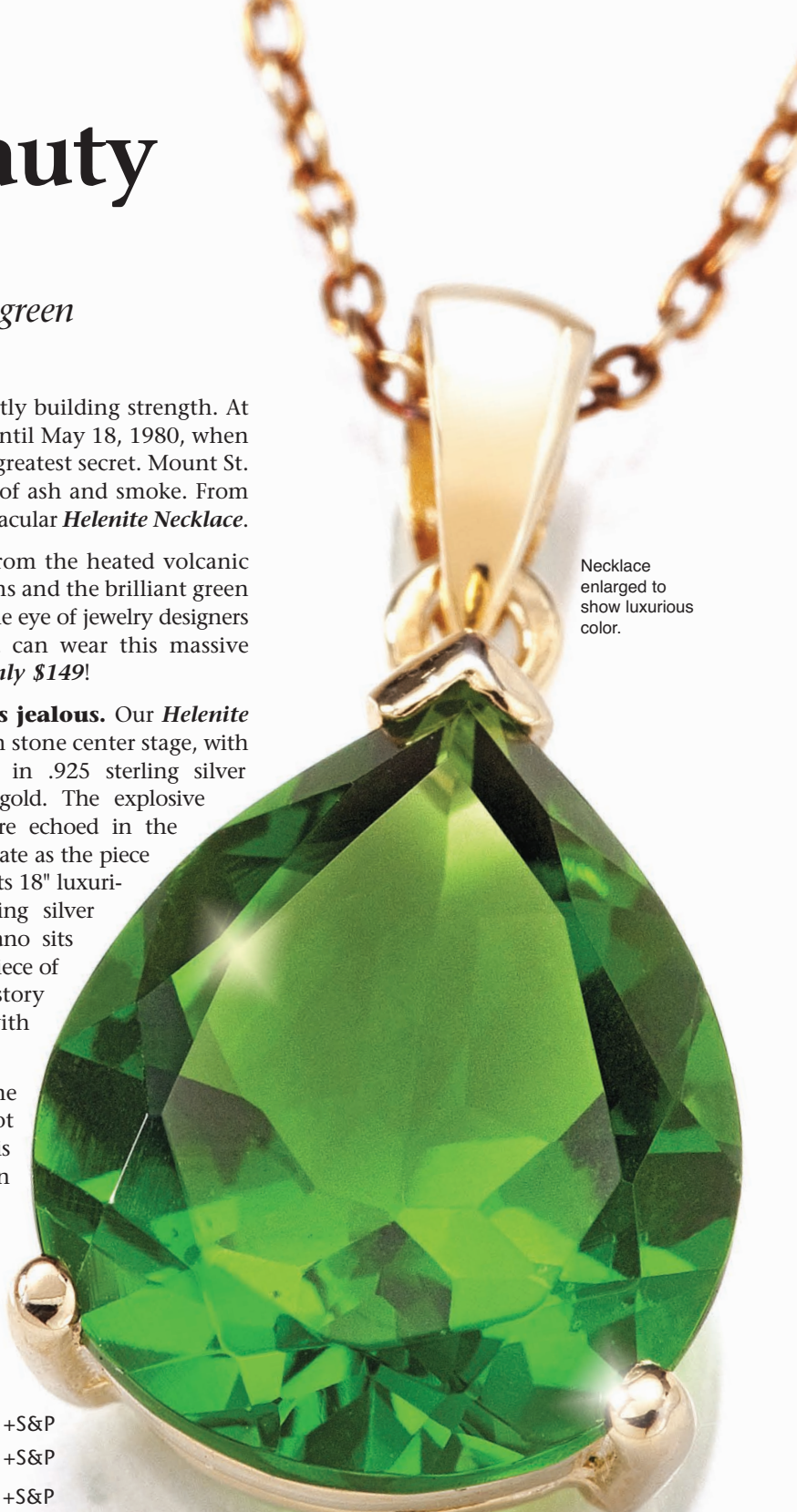
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istration wants to protect you from earnest and nerdy old guys who have opinions that some of your faculty do not share. Ask if this is why you're getting a college education."

■ A group of 58 gay-marriage advocates have signed a letter that reprimands the "eagerness by some supporters of same-sex marriage to punish rather than to criticize or to persuade those who disagree." "We reject that deeply illiberal impulse," the group explained, "which is both wrong in principle and poor as politics." The missive is timely. It has become sadly fashionable of late to compare the fight for gay marriage to the civil-rights movement of the late 1960s, a connection that presents opponents not merely as being of a different view but as unreconstructed bigots who must be excommunicated from the

in heaven. It's not even close." He may someday find that God is more tolerant of vice than he is.

■ With almost every breath, Democrats say that Republicans are waging a "war on women"—a phony war if there ever was one. But there is something like a war on the Boy Scouts; there is at least much hostility. The latest is that California's Advisory Committee on the Code of Judicial Ethics has recommended that judges be prohibited from associating with the Boy Scouts. The reason is that the Scouts practice "invidious discrimination" against gays. Of these two institutions, the California Advisory Committee on the Code of Judicial Ethics and the Boy Scouts of America, the latter has surely done more good.

It has become **sadly fashionable** of late to compare the fight for gay marriage to the civil-rights movement of the late 1960s.

public square. Brendan Eich, the short-lived CEO of Mozilla, recently discovered to his dismay that although he exhibited no animus toward his gay employees whatsoever, his views were held to be beyond the pale and his employment was therefore considered to be inappropriate. The "best and most free society is one that allows the largest number to live true to their core beliefs and identities," the signatories explained. Whether that "best society" lies ahead remains to be seen.

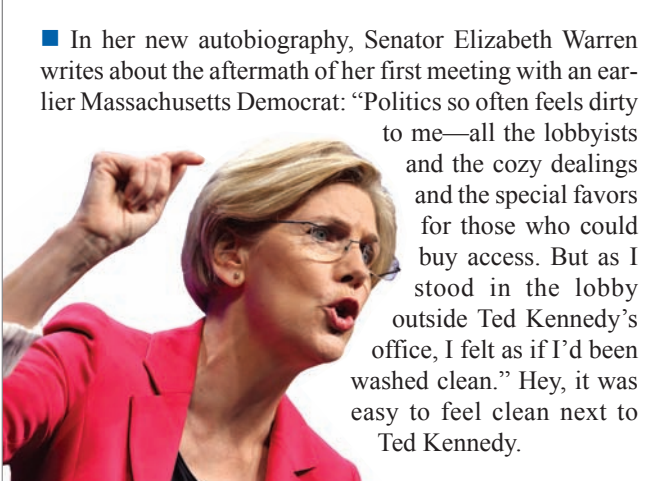
■ Media Matters, as sanctimonious a bunch of progressives as the world has to offer, are vocal supporters of organized labor and have argued that it should be easier to organize a union via "card check" rather than through the secret-ballot process. They *were* supporters, that is, until the SEIU tried to organize Media Matters, at which point the organization's executives did their best impersonation of the National Right to Work Committee. The group's employees have pronounced themselves "betrayed," the SEIU is in a snit, and conservatives are reliving the Iran–Iraq War, regretting only that both sides can't lose. The most energetic supporters of union-goon labor reliably are those who are protected from its costs. There is a reason that the SEIU and the Teamsters do not use their own high-dollar employees to picket nonconforming institutions: Even the Teamsters can't afford to pay Teamsters to do that.

■ Conservatives like to joke that liberalism has become a civil religion, with taxes replacing tithes, mandates taking the place of good deeds, and statements of political intent being regarded as the stuff of catechism. "Once abolish the God," G. K. Chesterton claimed, "and the government becomes the God." Michael Bloomberg appears to agree, explaining in an April interview that his work fighting against the right to bear arms, restricting New Yorkers' capacity to smoke in public, and establishing limits on soft drinks had all but guaranteed him entry to paradise. "I am telling you, if there is a God," Bloomberg said, "when I get to heaven I'm not stopping to be interviewed. I am heading straight in. I have earned my place

■ Solar energy is finally winning, liberals would have it: About a third of newly installed electricity capacity in the U.S. this year harnesses Apollo, while solar-panel prices continue to drop dramatically ("Salvation Gets Cheap," a Paul Krugman column was headlined). What's odd, then, is the amount of outrage directed toward a few attempts to regulate the integration of home solar panels into our highly regulated electric grid. Conservatives in some states have suggested that owners of such panels pay a tiny surcharge for the privilege of selling electricity back to utilities. Those utilities are forced to buy the electricity, for the most part, whether they want it or not; but somehow letting them charge a fee for hooking up panels amounts to an unconscionable attack on the success that is solar. The *Times*, of course, traces this effort back to the Koch brothers "and other big polluters." If liberals are concerned that utilities' recouping a \$5 surtax from an industry subsidized to the tune of billions is really going to dim its appeal, perhaps it's not the savior they say it is.

■ Nicotine vaporizers—the so-called electronic cigarettes—are the new Public Enemy No. 1 for the anti-tobacco and anti-smoking lobby, even though they contain no tobacco and you do not smoke them. Using vaporizers looks like smoking, some people enjoy them, and that, apparently, is enough. The FDA is handing down a raft of new regulations, a ban on selling the product to minors being the sole sensible one. (Even that is superfluous; no state permits sales to people under 18.) The FDA is imposing a cumbrous registration-and-review process, which will be especially difficult for smaller firms to comply with. In New York City, even more restrictive regulations on the sale and use of vaporizers are coming; using a vaporizer will be forbidden in any public space in which smoking is forbidden, which means practically every public space—and that is, New York's nicotine nannies might consider, part of the reason vaporizers became popular in the first place. Vaporized nicotine does not contain many of the harmful substances inhaled in smoking, and while the overall health effects of the devices are a matter of some debate, there are doctors

who prescribe their use for smoking cessation. New York has more significant threats to worry about. So does the nation.



■ In Marion County, Ore., the board of commissioners recently learned that the tissue of aborted fetuses was being used to generate electricity at the Covanta Marion plant in Brooks. To their credit, the commissioners took swift action and ordered the plant to stop. The offense was too strong to ignore; the commissioners delicately refrained from explaining why. Health authorities in the United Kingdom faced a similar scandal earlier this year, and their response was identical: *This is outrageous! Don't ask why!*

■ Have some conservatives been bamboozled by Russia Today's account of the Ukraine crisis? Some can be heard repeating an argument mounted by the Kremlin's media mouthpiece to the effect that the democratically elected Viktor Yanukovych was overthrown in an illegitimate coup by a nest of neo-fascists bent on extreme repression and aggression in Kiev. Wow, where is the Lincoln Brigade when you really need it? Oh, in Donetsk apparently. Let's look at what actually happened. Reporters not employed by Russia Today (RT) have worked out the following timeline: Yanukovych ordered the shooting of peaceful demonstrators. He failed to disperse them. But the slaughter meant that he was irredeemably discredited with all but his most thuggish supporters. He therefore began preparing to leave Kiev three days before he actually did so—his furniture, belongings, and portable treasures were quietly packed away and the security forces and equipment removed from government buildings in that time. Yanukovych spent those three days pretending to negotiate a deal with the Opposition and the European Union that—when it was finally agreed, allowing him to stay in office until December—he refused to sign. He then fled in a leisurely way to Russia. And having departed, he was voted out of the office he had abandoned by a more than three-quarters majority of the Ukrainian parliament, which had already voted by another massive majority to restore an earlier constitution with lesser presidential authority. These events constitute not a coup but a constitutional process. Yanukovych was indeed elected democratically, but he did not govern democratically. He was guilty of high crimes and misdemeanors, most of which were concealed, but his shooting of peaceful demonstrators took

place in full public view. Once he had done that, he was doomed constitutionally and politically. He knew it; so did Putin. Their joint efforts thereafter went into making it look as if his constitutional ousting from office by a parliamentary vote and his flight to a hostile foreign capital had been an illegitimate coup d'état by neo-fascist opponents. It was an exercise in laying the groundwork for reversing Kiev's democratic transition. We can see the temptation for anti-war conservatives to believe these convenient lies. It's a temptation they should resist. They shouldn't deny that aggression is happening simply because they don't want to fight it. Like RT, it ain't honest.

■ Secretary of State John Kerry has been working very hard on setting up a state for the Palestinians, in which case they would meet the Israeli state on equal terms and normal relations would supposedly reduce terrorism. This is the sort of ideal that diplomats concoct, and nobody in the real world thought it had much chance. So it has proved. Palestinians and Israelis have exhausted yet another round of the peace process that leaves them as far apart as ever, if not farther. Frustrated to the point of losing control of his emotions, Kerry told a meeting of the Trilateral Commission that if Israel does not follow his advice it risks winding up "an apartheid state with second-class citizens" or losing its Jewish character. Equal under the law, Palestinians already living in Israel are in parliament, the Supreme Court, and the military; they are more favored than Palestinians in any Arab country. Mention of apartheid suggests comparison to South Africa, and it is a prop of the campaign to delegitimize Israel. Remember when Kerry's fans praised him for his grasp of nuance?

■ When, last spring, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints reported that a second miracle attributed to the late Pope John Paul II was authentic, his elevation to the altar needed only Pope Francis's signature. Francis signed. With the next stroke of his pen he waived the requirement of a second miracle in the cause of John XXIII, the father of the Second Vatican Council (1962–65), whose 50th anniversary the Church has been observing. The two were canonized together in a ceremony that drew hundreds of thousands to St. Peter's Square and the streets of Rome. The decision to twin them is widely viewed as an effort to balance JP II's reputation for conservatism with Papa Giovanni's reputation for liberalism, although plainly the former's legacy is far too large to be contained by a political category. He's called John Paul the Great for a reason. And on liturgy, the point on which Vatican II has most alienated conservative Catholics, John was surprisingly conservative; the Latin Mass favored by traditionalist Catholics is known formally as the Mass of John XXIII. The final score of the J23–JP2 event: Ecclesia II, political scorekeepers nihil.

■ Liberals sometimes wonder why conservatives don't have more respect for the United Nations. Maybe this will help: The U.N. has just elected Iran to the women's-rights committee—the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women. Iran, remember, is a regime that stones girls to death for the "crime" of having been gang-raped. Our question is, Why do liberals respect the U.N. so much?

■ In 2014, an estimated 1.6 million American college students will move their tassels from right to left. The secret to their success? Parental involvement in high school, according to a new policy brief from the American Enterprise Institute. In “Dad and the Diploma: The Difference Fathers Make for College Graduation,” sociologist W. Bradford Wilcox finds that teenagers with “involved” fathers are 98 percent more likely to graduate from college than their peers with uninvolved dads. Father may not know best, but his being around does seem to boost learning.

■ Little Antonia Ayres-Brown ordered a Happy Meal at McDonald’s and requested a boy’s toy to go with it. She was given a girl’s toy instead. Having the counter staff mess up an order is hardly unusual, but Antonia took the experience rather hard, so she filed a complaint with the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities—which, in an unexpected outbreak of common sense, told her to get over it. In other words, even career civil-rights bureaucrats, whose job depends on finding discrimination where it doesn’t exist, thought Antonia’s complaint was trivial and absurd. This left her with only one option: *Slate*. In the click-hungry webzine, she and her father, a Yale professor, published the results of a Spurlockian research effort that involved 15 McDonald’s and a platoon of pre-teens: “We found that 92.9 percent of the time, the store, *without asking*, simply gave each child the toy that McDonald’s had designated for that child’s gender.” So now McDonald’s is right up there with Bull Connor. Here’s a pro tip: If you’re looking for cultural sensitivity and a nuanced appreciation of contemporary gender politics to go along with your fries, don’t pick a restaurant that’s represented by a clown.

■ A fraternity and a sorority at Dartmouth, Phi Delta Alpha and Alpha Phi, were planning to do something nice: stage a fundraiser for cardiac care. The problem was that they called their event a “Phiesta.” A Mexican-American student complained, saying that “there are various problematic structures and ideologies regarding a Cinco de Mayo-inspired event.” The Greek houses, abashed, canceled their event. A spokesman said, “We felt that the possibility of offending even one member of the Dartmouth community was not worth the potential benefits of having the fundraiser.” Ay, caramba.

■ Gabriel García Márquez did what few writers can: get millions of people to read them. His novels, especially *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, are among the most praised books of our time. Literature is often a matter of taste, and García Márquez’s “magic realism” is not for everyone. Character is less a matter of taste, or should be: García Márquez was a friend and defender of the Soviet Union and Communism elsewhere. He was a very great friend and defender of Fidel Castro. At the same time, of course, he was a determined foe of Castro’s enemies, i.e., Cubans who want to live in a free country. García Márquez was a Colombian who lived in Mexico. In every generation, there are people in free countries who support, perfume, and love dictators who keep other countries unfree. “Gabo,” as they called him, was maybe the most prestigious person in the

whole of Latin America. His prestige could have done great things for the Cuban people, and in particular the political prisoners. Instead, García Márquez lent his prestige to their jailers and torturers. Cuba is a one-party dictatorship with a gulag. “Gabo” gloried in this fact. He may have written prettily, but he did nasty things with his life. Dead at 87. R.I.P.



THE LAW

A Blow against Racial Bias

THE Supreme Court came to the right decision in *Schuette v. BAMN*, the University of Michigan affirmative-action case, but did so inconclusively, with the six concurring justices signing four different opinions. Unlike most similar cases preceding it, the Michigan case was not about whether a university may use racial preferences in its admissions process, but whether a state may decide *not* to use racial preferences.

The voters of Michigan approved by a large margin a constitutional amendment that prohibited the use of racial preferences in state-university admissions, among other things; the plaintiffs argued that prohibiting racial preferences while other forms of preferences remained (so-called legacy admissions, preferences for athletes or performing artists, etc.) put a unique burden on racial minorities. If they wish to win admissions preferences, they have to overturn a constitutional amendment rather than simply convince the university authorities of the merits of their case. All penumbra-probing to one side, this amounts to saying that partisans of racial preferences cannot lose in a constitutional-amendment referendum without the results of their loss being by definition unconstitutional. Justice Scalia argued that it was perverse that the people of Michigan, in attempting to impose equal treatment, were hauled up on a complaint of violating the equal-protection standard.

Justice Sotomayor, reading her dissent from the bench, insisted that the Constitution limits the things that majorities may do; we are glad to hear her say as much, and we hope that she will keep that in mind the next time a Second Amendment case comes her way. But citizens also may change constitutions, which is what happened in Michigan. And Michigan’s referendum did not place a unique burden on black Americans seeking to get their way through the political process; it placed a unique burden on partisans of racial discrimination seeking to get their way through the political process. The protected class in question here was not a racial minority but a political tendency.

A sufficiently clever and ethically flexible lawyer can distill any result from any statute or any line of the Constitution. We passed the Fourteenth Amendment to fight racial discrimination after fighting a bloody war over the status of black Americans, and we have a very large body of federal law policing racial dis-

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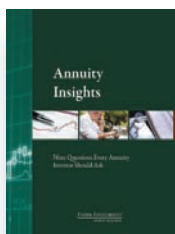
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crimination. That the states now apparently need the Supreme Court's permission to prohibit racial discrimination is morally absurd. As a legal question, *Schuette v. BAMN* finds only that the states *may* outlaw that discrimination. As a moral question, the states *should* do so, the sooner the better.

THE WORLD

Putin's Weakness, and Obama's

THE key to understanding the Ukraine crisis is the realization that, contrary to most of the overt and hidden assumptions of Western commentators, Putin is in a weak position and the West is in a strong one. It doesn't look like that and, listening to CNN or the BBC, it doesn't sound like that either. But it's true nonetheless.

Why do we think otherwise? The main reason is that we see that President Putin is in a tactically strong position. As President Obama noted in an overly lofty dismissal, Russia is at best a regional power. But since Ukraine is in the very same region, Russia enjoys a transparent advantage in this particular crisis. Strategically, however, Russia is weak. It is poorer than any single one of the major European powers; its economy is overly dependent on energy production; it needs foreign investment to develop new technologies, improve its human capital, and establish new industries.

To be sure, Western Europe is currently dependent on Russia for about one-quarter of its energy needs. That sometimes seems to be the only economic statistic about this crisis that CNN and the BBC know. Dependency, however, cuts both ways. Russia badly needs the money that its sales of energy bring in. And energy is almost as fungible as money. Ukraine is currently getting energy from Slovakia to compensate for Gazprom's cut-off of supplies. If Russia imposes other supply constraints for political reasons, it will achieve two objectives: Positively, it will temporarily disrupt energy supplies to its most lucrative customers; negatively, it will encourage them to accelerate their plans to switch to new forms of energy (e.g., Polish coal, U.S. coal and liquid natural gas, local shale gas) or new suppliers or both.

Not just America but the whole world is moving toward an energy-rich future—an energy glut that will copy and even outperform Reagan's cheap-energy-fueled boom of 1982 onward. Putin reads the *Wall Street Journal*; he knows this. He will therefore be very wary about using the energy weapon lest it boomerang.

Why then did Putin launch his annexation of Crimea and his subversion of eastern Ukraine? Well, to begin with, it wasn't part of his original plan. Putin thought he had won when he pressured Ukraine's bootboy president, Viktor Yanukovich, into breaking off negotiations with the European Union and dragging his country into a Eurasian Economic Union dominated by Russia. Ordinary Ukrainians rebelled against that, however, and when Yanukovich ordered his thugs to fire on the demonstrators, he fell from power and fled. Putin had lost the first hand of revolutionary bridge.

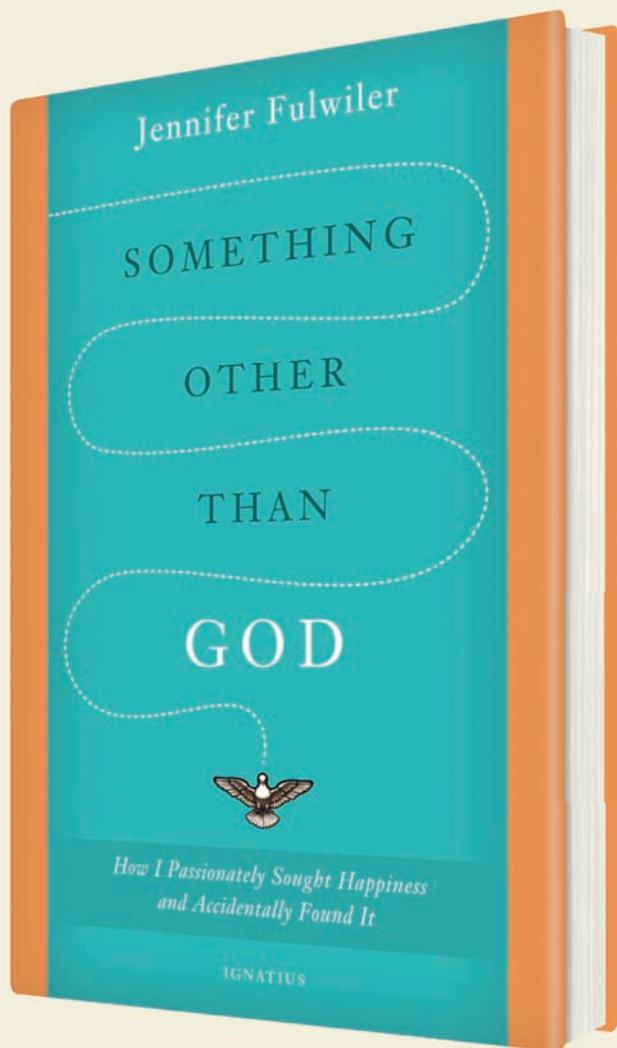
He then thought he could recoup his position by destabilizing Ukraine, regaining control of it by degrees, covering these moves in a smokescreen of propaganda about an illegitimate coup by neo-fascists in Kiev—wolf crying wolf, as Timothy Snyder put it—and moving a step further toward reversing the post-1989



European settlement. He seems to have calculated that the West would be too nervous, guilty, timid, and obsessed with its own economic interests to respond effectively. As with his invasion and occupation of Georgia, Putin would let the West's anxieties cool, make a few superficial concessions, promise not to seize anything else (at least not for a while), and resume the game of diplomatic reassurance. His immediate first step is to prevent Ukraine from holding elections that would produce an indisputably legitimate elected government.

Putin was not entirely wrong in this calculation; some in the West, including some conservatives, plainly want to play his game. But he was not entirely right either. Both Washington and the European Union have condemned Moscow's actions in the plainest terms. These may be merely words, but they cannot be easily withdrawn without some corresponding retreat by Putin. To be sure, the West's actual responses—sending troops to the Baltic states, imposing financial sanctions on named allies of Putin—are as yet woefully inadequate. Reviving the plan for anti-missile installations in Central Europe is one stronger response that might cause some second thoughts in the Kremlin—it would reverse one of Putin's own recent gains (and one of Obama's first foreign-policy innovations). And, of course, there are divisions between the allies on how tough any future Western responses might be. But there is a genuinely new mood of criticism and skepticism toward Putin's Russia in almost all Western capitals. What is wanting is a set of practical policies to turn that mood into a strategy.

President Obama cannot reasonably be expected to come up with that strategy. He has been unlearning most of his own ideas about foreign policy as this crisis has developed, and as Henry Kissinger has often pointed out, statesmen don't have the time to develop new concepts when they are in government. That may be a mercy on this occasion. Fortunately, President Reagan left behind a strategic legacy for his successor to imitate: the policy of strategic and economic competition with the Soviet Union. That strategy, applied today with particular emphasis on energy, would gradually weaken Russia and, within Russia, Putin. And by weakening Russia strategically, we would give ourselves the time and opportunity to fashion the best tactical response to Putin's subversion of eastern Ukraine. Our first step there must be to insist on all-Ukrainian elections—and force Putin either to accept them or to show just who is the neo-fascist in this game.



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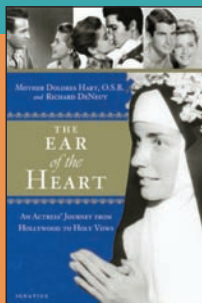
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JENNIFER FULWILER is a writer who chronicles her experiences of faith and family life on her popular blog, **ConversionDiary.com**. Her articles have appeared in *America*, *Our Sunday Visitor*, *Envoy*, and *National Review Online*. She has been a guest on the television shows *Fox and Friends*, *Life on the Rock*, and *The Choices We Face*, and was also the subject of the reality show *Minor Revisions*. She and her husband, Joe, live in Texas with their six young children.



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Notice Not Obamacare

Why the president wants you to look away from the details of his policy

BY RAMESH PONNURU

WHenever somebody says that an argument is settled, you can be sure that it is not. If it were settled, there would be no need to say so. No president will hold a press conference to announce that the argument over the prohibition of alcohol is settled, precisely because it truly is settled. So when President Obama declared the debate over his health-care law “settled” and “over,” as he did at an April 17 press conference, his performance was self-refuting.

The president was declaring victory in the Obamacare wars because more than 8 million people have enrolled in an insurance plan through the law’s exchanges—at least using the administration’s loose standard for enrollment. (How many of those enrollees will ever pay their premiums is unknowable.)

Compared with the broken-website days of October and November 2013, that enrollment figure is a magnificent achievement. In any other context it is less impressive. To see why, let’s review the arguments that each side of the Obamacare debate has been making during the debate, which has been running since the spring of 2009.

Supporters of the law, very much including the president himself, made three

principal claims on its behalf while getting it through Congress and defending it afterward. First, it would dramatically expand coverage. In February 2013, the Congressional Budget Office projected that in 2014 the law would provide coverage to 14 million people who would otherwise have lacked it. That estimate, note, was made even after the Supreme Court, on a 7–2 vote, ruled that states had to be given more leeway to refuse to participate in the Medicaid expansion that is one of the law’s main tools for expanding coverage.

Second, the law would control costs, reducing both premiums and deficits. President Obama said that premiums for the average family would drop by \$2,500. And third, the plan would leave existing insurance policies alone. You’d be able to keep your plan, and your doctor, if you wanted.

The critics argued that the law would instead increase costs, retard innovation, and lower the quality of care. Premiums would increase for many people. The law would prove more disruptive to existing insurance arrangements than the president and his allies were saying. Jobs would be lost. And the critics made additional claims—that the law would unconstitutionally expand governmental power

and violate conscience rights—where the dispute didn’t so much concern the effects of the law as how to characterize those effects.

What the critics rarely said in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, or most of 2013 was that nobody would sign up for coverage on the exchanges, or that the law would fail to increase the percentage of Americans with coverage. They said that much of the increased coverage would be of low quality, and that the coverage expansion could be accomplished at a lower cost. Some of them talked about the possibility of a “death spiral” in which Obamacare’s regulations reduced the incentive to buy insurance so much that the market collapsed—but for the most part they thought of this as something that would take a long time to happen if it happened at all. The argument over Obamacare, that is, has mostly taken for granted that more subsidies for health insurance could lead to more people having it.

Our experience of the law has not been quite what either side predicted. In part that’s because the law has not been implemented as written. The employer mandate, which critics put at the center of their case that the law would kill jobs, has not been put into effect. (The Congressional Budget Office has, however, found that other features of the law, such as its reduced subsidies as people move up the income scale, will discourage work by the equivalent of 2.5 million jobs a year.) The administration has put regulations that threatened to cancel many existing plans into a kind of legal limbo.

By the standards President Obama set, however, the law is closer to a failure than a success. Its biggest achievement is a modest decline in the percentage of Americans without insurance. And it is modest: Even the highest estimate of the increase in coverage (the one derived from Gallup polling) suggests that the percentage of Americans uninsured has dropped merely to around the level of 2008. At this point at least, even the projection the CBO made just a year ago (of 14 million fewer uninsured) seems implausibly optimistic.

Obama’s other promises—which were stated in strong terms—have largely failed to come about. Premiums have not dropped by \$2,500 per family; it is not clear that the law has brought them down, on average, at all. For millions of people

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they have gone up, thanks to the plan's regulations. Supporters say that in return for these higher premiums people are getting better coverage (and social justice). It's a debatable point, but it's not the way the law was sold.

Supporters of the law took credit when medical inflation came in low in the first years after the law's passage, but it had been on a declining trend for a decade; and the most recent estimates suggest that the trend may have just ended.

President Obama has already been forced to admit that his keep-your-plan promises were overstated. The future will bring more changes and cancellations to existing plans. Doctor networks will almost certainly narrow, for example, because shrinking those networks is one of the few ways the law allows insurers to compete on price. Cuts in Medicare Advantage, a relatively market-oriented portion of the program with high rates of customer satisfaction, have been deferred but may eventually take effect.

A law can do some good, of course, while not living up to the promises made about it. It cannot be denied that the law has made some people better off. The coverage expansion means that more Americans have the extra measure of financial security that comes from knowing that medical expenses will not drive them into poverty. That's a real good, something the law's critics have sometimes failed to acknowledge.

But Obamacare's champions have greatly exaggerated what this good involves, and so what it should mean for our overall assessment of the law. During the battle to enact Obamacare, and subsequently, supporters have claimed that the expansion would save thousands of lives. A study of Oregon Medicaid recipients—the best such study we have—has instead found that coverage did not significantly improve any physical health outcomes. If the value of insurance is that it protects against financial calamity, then the approach of Obamacare is radically misconceived: We ought instead to have undertaken reforms to enable everyone to purchase catastrophic coverage. In other words, different policies could have achieved the good that Obamacare has done, at much lower cost. Or perhaps even more good, since the expansion has included fewer people than expected.

Obamacare's near-death experience during the last months of 2013 has dis-

torted the media's treatment of the program, making it seem more successful than it is. From 2009 through mid 2013, the critics were not saying that the exchange websites would be a catastrophic failure. They were, by and large, taken by surprise as much as the administration was by their early dysfunction. Leaving aside those chaotic months, the picture of Obamacare today looks more like one the critics painted than the one supporters did: a lot of trouble for a small gain.

The political story is roughly the same as the substantive one. The law is in better shape than it was in late 2013, but in the same general condition it was before then. The administration is hoping, and doing its best to ensure, that the 8 million enrollments will be a turning point in the politics of the law. But there have been other promised turning points along the way, and all have turned out to be mirages. The law was supposed to become popular once it was enacted, or once its first benefits became available in late 2010, or once protections for people with preexisting conditions came into effect early this year. It did not happen any of those times.

Obamacare has improved its standing in some recent polls, but the basic picture of public opinion remains what it has been for a long time. More Americans continue to disapprove than to approve of it. At the same time, only a minority wants to repeal it, because many people want it fixed or changed.

It is certainly not going to be repealed, or seriously modified, during the Obama administration. It was obvious that the law was going to stay in place through 2016 as soon as Obama got reelected. Nearly everyone involved in the debate understood, once that happened, that the law would have four more years to become entrenched, in the sense that beneficiaries and medical industries would get used to it.

For the law to be repealed in 2017 requires three things: Republicans have to

remain committed to its repeal, they have to sweep the 2016 elections, and they then have to follow through on their pledges. That is not the way to bet. But it is still the right goal to work toward, given that the law is likely to have bad effects on American health care and governance and that its structure does not permit much constructive reform.

The more popular the law becomes, the less likely it is that any of those preconditions will obtain. Conversely, the more credible and attractive an alternative becomes, the more likely they will. If voters believe that repealing Obamacare will mean stripping insurance from millions of people, they will be more inclined to favor keeping the law, to vote for Democrats, and to balk at repeal even if Republicans win in 2016.

Some Republicans have advanced replacement plans that could equal or exceed Obamacare on coverage while beating it on cost—and, at the same time, moving American health care toward a more free-market and less government-heavy model than it has followed for decades. These plans start with the insight that federal policies have prevented the emergence of the robust market in health insurance that we need, and they therefore change those policies.

The taxes and regulations that need changing are numerous, and so by necessity these plans include several steps. The key step, though, is to reconfigure the tax break for employer-provided health insurance in two ways. Those outside the employer system would get a tax credit enabling them to buy at least catastrophic coverage, and the government would no longer provide anyone with an open-ended subsidy for purchasing the most expensive possible insurance plan. That change would open the path to a health-insurance system with more financial security, more cost control, and less disruption than Obamacare has entailed.

Some Republicans have balked at endorsing this sort of plan. Their various reasons generally boil down to an aversion to giving a tax credit to people with low federal tax liabilities, or no liabilities. That principle, if so it can be called, could prove an expensive one, because it could do more than any enrollment figure to cause the health-care debate to be "settled," after all, on President Obama's terms.

NR



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each year, until the budget is balanced!

- ✓ **Obamacare.** Repeal it and replace it!
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- ✓ **Abortion.** It's barbaric. End it!
- ✓ **Illegal Immigration.** Secure our borders. Now!
- ✓ **Redistribution of Income.** It's morally wrong.
- ✓ **Welfare.** Replace it. Enable those on welfare to share in the American dream.
- ✓ **Judges.** Appoint Constitutional judges
- ✓ **Political Correctness.** It's dangerous. End it.
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John Philip Sousa IV, Chairman
(great grandson of John Philip Sousa)
National Draft Ben Carson for President Committee

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Using Race

For the Left, racism is and always has been a tool

BY KEVIN D. WILLIAMSON

EACH time the federal government of these United States comes close to emerging from its eternal psychosis on the question of using a crude system of racial classifications to condition citizens' relationship with the state, it suffers a relapse. In the Supreme Court's latest ex cathedra decree on the issue, regarding the use of racial preferences in Michigan state-university admissions, there were four separate opinions for the prevailing side alone, together commanding the concurrence of six justices, while Justices Sotomayor and Ginsburg of the Left bloc were united in dissent, and Justice Kagan absented herself from the case. The most charitable reading of that outcome, which also is the gullible reading, is that the legal questions are difficult and therefore splintered these, the best and most judicious legal scholars in our land. The more likely reading is that the Court is engaged in politics rather than in jurisprudence, that this has been the case for some time, and that the various justices' reading of the Constitution is dependent upon their decisions rather than the other way around.

It is difficult not to share in the frustration of Antonin Scalia. "It has come to this," Justice Scalia writes. "Called upon to explore the jurisprudential twilight zone between two errant lines of precedent, we confront a frighteningly bizarre question: Does the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment *forbid* what its text plainly *requires*? Needless to say (except that this case obliges us to say it), the question answers itself." He goes on to quote himself in *Grutter v. Bollinger*: "'The Constitution proscribes government discrimination on the basis of race, and state-provided education is no exception.' It is precisely this understanding—the correct understanding—of the federal Equal Protection Clause that the people of the State of Michigan have adopted for their own fundamental law. By adopting it, they did not simultaneously *offend* it." The plaintiffs in the case argued that by adopting a constitutional amendment, the people

of Michigan unfairly disadvantaged those who would seek to use the political process to impose official racial preferences on the people of that state; George Will points out that the First Amendment likewise disadvantages those who wish to establish a Church of the United States and fill its collection plates with tax dollars. That constitutions limit the possible outcomes of the democratic process is the reason we have them; if they do not limit the power of majorities, they are little more than studies in calligraphy.

Understanding the political schizophrenia of the United States regarding so-called affirmative-action policies is somewhat easier if one digests the fact that those who today advocate the use of racial discrimination for purportedly benevolent purposes are members of the same party and the same political movement that advocated the use of racial discrimination for plainly malevolent purposes not very long ago. The Democratic party, and the progressive movement of which it is the main instrument, has never objected to racial discrimination as such; they have only reassessed the electorate and subsequently reconsidered the ends toward which racial discrimination should be used.

The modern Democratic party, and the modern Left, has convinced itself of a fantasy version of its own history in which the two parties suddenly and inexplicably swapped places on the issues of race and racism. The Republicans gave the world Abraham Lincoln while the Democrats threw up Bull Connor, but Democrats believe they can explain this uncomfortable fact away thus: "There were a lot of nasty segregationists and white supremacists in our party in those ancient days when the Beatles were still performing in suits, but those were *conservatives*, whereas *progressives* were as clean as pins on matters racial." This is true only if one defines "conservative" as *racist* and "progressive" as *anti-racist*. But the actual history of the 20th century is both more complicated and less.

Bernie Sanders, the maple-glazed son of Brooklyn who represents the state of Vermont and the cause of socialism in the United States Senate, is fond of issuing a litany of policies that Republicans would like to see repealed, among them Social Security, the minimum wage, Medicare, and Medicaid. (From his lips to Mitch McConnell's exquisitely sensitive ears!) There are conservatives and Republicans who today seek to lay waste to the New

Deal and the mid-century progressive consensus, and they are the political heirs of the conservatives and Republicans who tried to prevent the establishment of those programs in the first place. In a comprehensive study of congressional votes from 1933 to 1950, political scientist Ira Katznelson—then at the New School for Social Research—and two other scholars tabulated the roll-call votes and broke them into six broad categories relating to conservative and progressive positions: civil rights, fiscal policy, economic planning, business regulation, welfare programs, and labor legislation. The Republicans of the day voted as Senator Sanders might expect the conservatives of 2014 to vote: They were very hostile to fiscal expansion, economic planning, regulation, welfare programs, and labor protections. In no case did Republicans give more than a third of their votes on economic matters to what Professor Katznelson describes as the Left bloc. By contrast, Republicans supported civil rights 77 percent of the time.

Southern Democrats, those alleged conservatives, were practically indistinguishable from non-southern Democrats on questions of fiscal liberalism and economic intervention through government planning and regulation. They favored welfare programs with 73 percent of their votes. They differed from their non-southern Democratic colleagues on only two issues: civil rights, as expected, and labor. It is worth noting that even non-southern Democrats had by Professor Katznelson's count a less respectable record than did Republicans on civil rights, and that southern Democrats came in about halfway between non-southern Democrats and Republicans on labor issues—but were distant outliers on racial issues. Contrary to the myth of the conservative southern Democrat, the sons of the Confederacy voted en bloc with the GOP on a vanishingly small number of issues; as Professor Katznelson puts it, "a Republican-southern Democratic alliance appeared on labor questions exclusively." On the progressive agenda—from business regulation to the creation of the modern welfare state—southern and non-southern Democrats voted together 87 percent of the time.

Democratic segregationists north and south were instrumental in the passage of such progressive policies as the minimum wage and Social Security, in the latter case excluding agricultural workers and domestic servants, thereby shutting out two-thirds

of the black work force in the South. There was no contradiction in the opposition of a New Dealer such as Lyndon Johnson to anti-lynching laws, or indeed in this piece of advice to the South from a capital-P Progressive such as Senator Rebecca Latimer Felton: “If it takes lynching to protect women’s dearest possession from drunken, ravening beasts, then I say lynch a thousand a week.” The progressives and the racists were in no small part the same people.

Progressives imagine themselves to be scientific, or empirical, as Ezra Klein would have it, and their ambitions are managerial. For humanity to be organized and regimented it must first be classified, and hence the progressive romance with race, class, sex, etc. This sometimes has odd results, such as the extraordinary attention paid to the imaginary “1 percent,” as though that were a coherent and semi-permanent group of individuals rather than a statistical abstraction that has few of the same members from year to year. As any corporate foot soldier knows, you manage what you measure, and if you measure university admissions by race, you will get racial disparities.

Considering the racial composition of the class of 2014 at the University of Michigan, and noting the underrepresentation of African Americans therein, one might ask some uncomfortable questions about the public schools and their relatively poor performance in preparing black students for life after high school, or about prevailing cultural norms that see black children growing up disproportionately in poor and single-mother households. Simply passing a law mandating that university admission policies be revised until the desired racial proportion is reached should strike an intelligent person as the crudest approach imaginable—but if you are a member of a party and a political tendency with a two-century history of using the government as a racially regimented spoils system, doing so makes a lot more sense. Today’s progressives are invested in the relative poverty and marginalization of black Americans, and no less convinced than their political ancestors were a generation ago that using race as a tool of public policy can serve their ends. Justice Sotomayor’s yogic accommodation of racial bias is not an emblem of how much the Democratic party has changed since the days of Bedsheets Byrd, but of how little.

NR

Liberal Slumlords

*Policies that enable them;
policies that wouldn’t*

BY REIHAN SALAM

WHEN Donald Sterling, the notoriously racist billionaire owner of the Los Angeles Clippers, was caught on tape saying hateful things about African Americans, it sparked a torrent of news coverage, and for good reason. The Clippers have long been one of the most abysmal teams in the NBA, yet they’re now fielding one of the best. Many wondered if the team’s predominantly black players would countenance playing in this year’s playoffs for a man almost universally regarded as despicable. Others have reflected on what makes Sterling so awful. So allow me to instead reflect on what has made Sterling so rich.

Sterling is what we colloquially call a “slumlord,” which is to say he’s a real-estate investor who has thrived by renting low-quality housing at high prices to low-income families in southern California. Los Angeles, like many cities across the United States, suffers from a dire shortage of affordable rental housing—a shortage that is particularly acute in liberal cities. And lo and behold, these shortages redound to the benefit of slumlords like Sterling, who can charge sky-high rents because development restrictions make it prohibitively expensive for real-estate developers to build multifamily housing.

In earlier eras, when entrenched social norms, discriminatory lending practices, and the threat of violence kept America’s neighborhoods racially segregated, cities had parallel housing markets: one for whites, in which the housing supply was plentiful and thus relatively inexpensive; and one for blacks, in which the housing supply was severely limited and thus relatively expensive, despite the fact that blacks tended to be poorer than whites. Unscrupulous slumlords—Sterling’s spiritual ancestors—made a mint off of poor blacks by exploiting this artificial scarcity.

Cities are far less racially segregated now than they were for most of the last century, and the terror tactics that kept African Americans concentrated in ghettos are a thing of the past. But slumlords continue to

exploit artificial scarcity in the housing market to the detriment of poor people, a disproportionately large share of whom are nonwhite. Now, however, they do it with the complicity of liberal voters in big cities.

In 2011, UCLA economist Matthew Kahn drew on city-level data to determine whether the political leanings of a community had an impact on whether it issued new housing permits between 2000 and 2008. After comparing liberal cities to observationally identical non-liberal places in the same metropolitan areas, he found that the higher a city’s liberal vote share, the fewer housing permits it issues. And this remains true when you hold per capita income and education level and a number of other factors constant. There are many reasons why liberal voters might support development restrictions. The most obvious possibility is that they do so on environmentalist grounds. Whatever the reason, the results are not pretty for the poor.

One of the ironies of Kahn’s finding is that several of California’s larger, liberal cities have passed living-wage ordinances or local minimum wages higher than the state minimum wage, or both, on the grounds that the cost of living is so high that low-wage workers can barely get by, even if they work full time. It really is a problem that the market wages of the poor aren’t high enough to allow them to secure decent housing within reasonable reach of employment opportunities. But of course a central reason the cost of living is so high in these cities is that liberal voters limit housing permits. We thus find ourselves in a strange loop.

Last fall, California passed a statewide increase of the minimum hourly wage to \$9 this July and to \$10 by the beginning of 2016. Even if we assume, generously, that this increase won’t decrease employment levels or job growth, there is the small problem that California’s low-wage workers will still have to find a place to live. And if, as is typical, these low-wage workers are in service jobs, in fast-food restaurants and the like, they’ll need to live within commuting distance of their middle- and high-income customers. Because low-wage workers tend to be asset-poor, they will almost certainly have to find rental housing. So guess who will capture a hefty chunk of their wage increase? That’s right—it will be slumlords like Donald Sterling, who profit from strict limits on new housing permits.

I don’t doubt that supporters of higher minimum wages are sincere in their desire to help low-wage workers. But by ignoring the way limits on new housing development

punish low- and middle-income families, they're missing an essential part of why so many Americans are struggling. Think about it. If high rents drive you farther and farther away from your job, you're forced to work fewer hours and spend less time with your family. That means you earn a lower income, you accumulate less wealth, and, if you have children, you have less time for the demands of parenting.

It would be one thing if development restrictions were a problem only in California, but they're not. A recent report from Harvard's Joint Center for Housing Studies finds that in the wake of the housing bust, the share of U.S. households who are renters has gone from 31 percent in 2004 to 35 percent in 2012. And there is good reason to believe that this share will continue to increase. The trouble is that while the number of renter households has surged, construction of new rental units has not kept pace. Most of the new demand has been met by the migration of homes from the owner-occupied stock to the rental-housing stock as investors have snapped up foreclosed properties. Yet in high-cost cities, this migration hasn't been enough to make rental housing affordable. It is true that the development of new multifamily properties is picking up. The problem is that it is picking up in right-leaning states such as Texas, where housing is already relatively affordable, more than in high-cost cities on the east and west coasts, where the lack of affordable rental housing has reached a crisis point.

Rather than focus on minimum-wage hikes, policymakers would do well to pay attention to housing supply. The best way to loosen the grip that slumlords like Donald Sterling have on rental markets in big cities across the country is to allow other real-estate developers to build, and to compete with one another on rents until their housing is within easy reach of low- and middle-income Americans. Better still, we might focus on attacking the cost of living in all kinds of domains—the cost of housing, but also the cost of commuting, groceries, medical care, and other essentials—as a more effective strategy than yielding to the siren song of a higher minimum wage.

It is all but inevitable that Donald Sterling will be forced to sell the Los Angeles Clippers, and some other billionaire will soon have the pleasure of buying the team at a discount. Wouldn't it be nice if we could also do something for the low- and middle-income renters who have little choice but to rent Sterling's apartments? **NR**

Public-Land Colonialism

Of Cliven Bundy and the Bureau of Land Management

BY TRAVIS KAVULLA

CLIVEN BUNDY and his rogue herd of cattle burst onto the national news scene last month, and in doing so, he introduced the American public to an agency that many had never heard of: the Bureau of Land Management.

Out West, the acronym "BLM" is a fixture of the vernacular. It may well be the arm of government that has the greatest control over rural westerners' way of life.

The BLM tends to an estate of dry prairie, desert, badlands, and sand dunes that was not high on anyone's list of desirable acreage during the era of western settlement: too dry to be farmed, not enough grandeur to be designated a national park or wilderness. It was first open range and later became, after the federal government asserted its title over this land, the largest piece of leasable real estate in the American West—245 million acres, an area bigger than the mid-Atlantic states and New England combined. The BLM is its landlord.

This public land remains a vast commons—but, today, it is a highly regulated one, subject to the codex of federal environmental laws. Most noteworthy is the Endangered Species Act, the regulatory emanations of which incorporate lowly critters into a growing canon of animals worthy of protection above all else. Some are called "endangered," others merely "threatened," still others "warranted but precluded" from being labeled endangered (that is, for the time being).

So long as these animals—the desert tortoise, the delta smelt, the sage-grouse—go unmolested as the public makes use of the public's land, BLM land is mostly open to the public. You can take a hike on it, ride a horse on it, and fish and hunt non-endangered species on it.

Mr. Kavulla, a former associate editor of NATIONAL REVIEW, represents a large, rural part of Montana on the state's Public Service Commission.

It is also possible to apply for a license or lease to make *productive* use of this land. Just as national forests were created as repositories of the nation's timber inventory, the West's ranges were open to those who would take a crack at ranching, drilling, or mining them, and thereby eke out a living in a place no one else wanted.

That brings us to Mr. Bundy. Ranchers of cattle and sheep on BLM land are in the unique position of having hitched their fortunes, often over many generations, to federal land policy as decided and executed by the BLM. These families qualify for a grazing lease because they own adjacent land that is designated as a kind of home base for their livestock. Mr. Bundy owns only a modest "one quarter section," 160 acres, not nearly enough for his herd. Ranchers who lease BLM land pay a per-head fee (this year, it is \$1.35 per month) for this grazing right.

At least, they should pay, and virtually all BLM-dependent ranchers do pay. Mr. Bundy has not. There is little meaningful difference between Mr. Bundy and the leftist urban squatter who claims he has a right to others' property because they aren't using it in ways that are satisfactory to him. Add this to Mr. Bundy's declarations on race, and he is a poor candidate for the lionizing treatment he has received in some quarters of the Right.

That is unfortunate, since the cause for reforming federal land management needs a good bannerman. The BLM's leasing practices came to exist because of the potential for a "tragedy of the commons"—the depletion of resources that occurs when ranching, farming, timbering, or drilling happen on the same public land without a means to restrict and compensate for that access. What has happened since is a reverse tragedy of the commons: The process of obtaining permission to use the commons has become so suffocating that often no productive use occurs.

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) requires an excruciatingly complex process before even mundane land-use decisions can be made. In fact, just to explain the NEPA process, the BLM has a 184-page handbook issued by the agency's Division of Decision Support, Planning, and NEPA. The gist of NEPA is that the BLM, and all other federal agencies, must draw up either a resource-management plan (RMP) or an environmental-impact statement through a years-long public process before

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restrictions exist elsewhere for solar energy (a tortoise thing). There are also unrealistic mandates to put electric-transmission lines underground.

Even if the BLM bureaucracy itself doesn't hinder a healthy natural-resources economy, there is always a chance the agency's political superiors will. In his final days in office in 2001, Bill Clinton invoked the American Antiquities Act to designate a huge stretch of land the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument, taking almost a half million acres out of production to most uses, with no process other than his own signature. Public lands are fertile soil for such legacy actions, especially

when presidents have been unable to get their legislative agenda accomplished the old-fashioned way (i.e., with the consent of Congress). Public-land-dependent communities out West are justifiably concerned that the waning days of the Obama presidency will see more decrees of this nature.

There is a word for this manner of controlling lands from afar, employing a bureaucracy whose workings are not well understood by the people they most affect, and that word is "colonialism." People like Mr. Bundy (and a lot of people *not like him*) have long argued for greater local control of BLM and other public lands. This is an excellent policy suggestion. States have an incentive to make productive use of these lands, and they are closer to the people those land-use decisions affect. But will low-population western states have the clout to pull a local-management agenda off in Washington? Unlikely.

Another approach one state, Utah, has taken is to claim that BLM lands are subject to a legal "duty to dispose" of them (to the state or to private parties). A Federalist Society paper recently observed that this position is implicitly supported by language in the act that brought Utah into the union, which gives the federal government those lands "until the title thereto shall have been extinguished."

The federal government at least has a duty to act like a reasonable landlord, out to use the land as the economic engine of the country that it could be. It is not doing so today. **NR**

practically any decision on land use is made.

The public's practical access to this decision-making process is limited. That's because the typical RMP is a thousand-page blizzard of administrative jargon. One representative example from the BLM field office in Billings, Mont. (one of several in the state), has a table of contents that alone runs to 38 pages, plus another 9 pages simply to list the abbreviations used in the document. The bulk of the document is everything from a summary of the academic literature on particular endangered species' habitats and breeding rituals to a description of several alternatives (one of them is eventually selected in the final RMP) to using the swath of land to which the RMP will apply. Only well-organized environmental activists and industry groups have the means to comment on an RMP in the native tongue of land-management jargon that the BLM speaks.

The positions of these two factions are often difficult to reconcile. And the BLM is hamstrung by a vague and self-contradicting mandate for "multiple use" that is defined by law (the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976) as "harmonious and coordinated management of the various resources without permanent impairment of the productivity of the land and the quality of the environment with consideration being given to the relative values of the resources and not necessarily to the combination of uses that will give the greatest economic return or the greatest unit output."

This mumbo-jumbo means there is a lot of room for subjective judgment cloaked

in the guise of by-the-handbook central planning. For instance, two draft RMPs released within 50 days of one another last year in Montana (one for the central north of the state and one for the southeast) came to entirely different conclusions about how wide a berth the sage grouse required from oil and gas activities in its mating habitat. One RMP said two miles. The other, one mile. Are the sage-grouse in the north less inhibited in their hanky-panky than their brethren elsewhere? The RMPs did not explain.

It is absurd, yet gravely important. That's because the Greater Sage-Grouse is one of those special "warranted but precluded" species, standing in the queue for an "endangered" listing while the feds rescue other animals on the to-save list. In Montana, one county that is a traditional center of natural-gas production has a whopping 53 percent of its subsurface minerals controlled by the BLM. The agency's opinion of how the birds get it on has thus become one of the most important questions concerning economic development in the area, and implicates millions of energy-rich acres throughout the West. The recent proposed RMPs in Montana more than quadruple the land off-limits to "surface occupancy," which makes oil and gas drilling virtually impossible. Only about 1 million acres of a 10 million-acre federal estate would be open to drilling activities under standard leasing conditions.

Nor is it just oil and gas. Most land in those RMPs is closed or designated an "avoidance area" for wind-energy development (also a bird thing), and similar

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Pipelines, Wind Farms, And Gods

*A snapshot of our energy debate from
rural Nebraska*

BY JAY NORDLINGER

Diller, Neb.

DRIVING out of the Lincoln airport, I pull onto I-80. And the first thing I see is a flatbed with a very long, strange white object on it. The object looks almost extraterrestrial. What is it? Turns out it's a blade for a wind turbine. And this relates to my purpose here in Nebraska.

I'm heading to the southeast corner of the state, near the Kansas line. There, a wind farm has gone up, disturbing the community. At the same time, the Keystone XL pipeline, which would run through the area, is blocked. Blocked by politics. This corner of the country provides a snapshot of our national, and often weird, energy debate.

The pipeline would carry oil from Alberta, Canada, down to the Gulf Coast. It requires President Obama's okay. He and his administration have been "studying" the issue for the entirety of his presidency. Some people speak of "KST," for "Keystone Standard Time." That means very slow.

For the environmentalist Left, the pipeline is a cause célèbre. They are working very hard against it. Daryl Hannah, the actress, chained herself to the White House fence. Robert Redford has lectured Nebraskans and others about the evils of the pipeline.

The state's governor, Dave Heineman, a Republican, is a proponent. Initially, he was an opponent. Or rather, he opposed the planned route, saying it might threaten water supplies. But in January 2013, Heineman approved a new route. A leading activist in this state said, "Governor Heineman sided with a foreign corporation today and turned his back on our water and property rights." (Keystone is owned by TransCanada.)

Nationalism aside, the major claims against the pipeline are these: It would be at risk of accident. It would scar or defile

the land. It would perpetuate our dependence on oil, which is causing our planet to overheat.

There are many pipelines beneath the ground here in southeast Nebraska, near the villages of Diller and Steele City. (That second village has fewer than a hundred people in it, despite the word "city.") As Ray Rohr, a local excavator, says, "Some people act like a pipeline is something new. We've had pipelines for years." He has worked on some of them.

In the early 1950s, the Platte Pipeline went in. At the dedication ceremony, Senator Hugh Butler hailed "the most significant event to occur in this part of the country since the railroads tied the West and the East into a united country." Other pipelines include the Trailblazer, the Northern Natural, the Rockies Express, and the Keystone—yes, the Keystone. The XL would be merely the latest of the Keystone pipelines.

Occasionally, there is a problem, say Rohr and others: a leak, an explosion. But these are very few and far between. Moreover, pipeline technology has made great strides. The lines are safer than ever. They feature automatic-shutoff valves, for example. The fuss over the Keystone XL, in light of Nebraska's long experience with pipelines, baffles many people. Rohr thinks it has to do with the terrible BP explosion in the Gulf four years ago. People saw it on their televisions and associated it with the oil industry at large.

There is almost no visible evidence of the pipelines. Now and then, you'll see an above-ground station. Otherwise, the pipelines are buried, "out of sight and out of mind," as Robert Milligan, who has a farm in this area, says. You can see wagon ruts from the Oregon Trail (some 150 years after they first appeared). The pipelines, not really.

What is very much visible is the wind farm: the Steele Flats Wind Farm. The turbines are enormous, inescapable, "in your face," as Cynthia Milligan says. They utterly alter the landscape, and, in some eyes, blight it.

The Nebraska Public Power District set a goal: By 2020, 10 percent of energy should come from renewable sources. The relevant boards in this part of Nebraska held hearings last spring. The subject was the wind farm. Arguments flew back and forth, naturally. Also naturally, there was an element of NIMBY: "Not in my backyard." This affects fam-

ilies high and low. In Massachusetts, the Kennedy family objected to the Cape Wind Project—which would spoil the view from their storied compound.

Here in the Diller-Steele City area, Kevin McIntyre objected to the Steele Flats project. For one thing, he didn't want to put up with the noise of the turbines. He was quoted by the *Beatrice Daily Sun* as saying, "I want to go out on my back deck and sit in peace and quiet and listen to the cows or to the birds. We all pray for rain at church. I'm going to pray for lack of wind."

Other residents were friendlier to the turbines, including those who would have them on their property: They would receive about \$7,000 per turbine, per year. The turbines are expected to be in place for 20 years.

There are 44 of them. They went up last summer and fall. They were installed by NextEra Energy Resources, a company out of Florida. The company got in under the wire: At the end of the year, Congress let the tax subsidy for wind expire. But those who began construction before December 31 get to enjoy their subsidy for the next ten years.

These turbines are enormous, as I said. You almost have to see them to understand how dominating they are. Each turbine is 426 feet tall—taller than the capitol tower in Lincoln, as Cynthia Milligan points out. (Nebraska's capitol is the second-tallest in the country, after Louisiana's.)

Talking to Bill and Judy Holliger, I say, "The turbines are kind of interesting at first. Kind of pretty. But then you get tired of them." Bill gives me a wry smile: "Don't take long." Judy says they can distract you when you're driving. Then there's the noise. These new turbines are quieter than older ones, which make an awful racket. But they are not silent (understandably). Judy says the sound reminds you of a jet overhead, which, however, does not pass.

At night, the turbines have red lights, blinking in sync—in the visual equivalent of unison. Ray Rohr has seen these lights from at least 25 miles away. Again, they can be kind of neat, at first. But they're not like an art exhibition that is soon taken down. They are permanent, or nearly so.

I ask various residents, "Do you think you'll get used to the turbines? Do you think you'll reach a point where you'll look past them, not notice them? Where

You deserve a factual look at . . .

The Truth about the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement

Does it stand for Middle East peace or does it seek Israel's destruction?

Leaders of the effort to boycott, divest from and apply sanctions against Israel—the so-called BDS movement—say they stand for an “end to the occupation of the Palestinian territories,” “justice in Palestine” and “freedom for the Palestinian people.” But what are the real motives of BDS leaders—do they really want peace between Israel and the Palestinian people?

What are the facts?

While the BDS movement uses highly emotive language in their appeals for support—such as “ending repression” and “Israeli war crimes”—a closer look at the real motives of the movement reveals a more sinister goal.

First, note that the BDS movement focuses only on alleged war crimes and repression by Israel—and ignores real war crimes and tyrannical repression by other Middle Eastern nations and terrorist organizations. When Hamas and Hizbollah target thousands of rockets at Israeli civilian populations in violation of international law, BDS utters not a word of criticism, let alone a call for boycotts or sanctions.

When Iran's government violently crushes peaceful protests and Egypt stifles its press and political opposition with a dictatorial hand, BDS is likewise silent. Why?

By singling out Israel for criticism and economic pressure, BDS employs a double standard—a hypocritical and dishonest tactic frequently used by anti-Israel and anti-Semitic hate groups.

The reason, as we'll see, is that the BDS movement is not really interested in alleged war crimes or repression. Rather its purpose is to delegitimize and then destroy Israel.

The second critical fact about the BDS movement is that while it masquerades behind words like “freedom” and “occupation,” one need only listen closely to its rhetoric to realize that these are code words for the elimination of Israel.

BDS leaders oppose a two-state solution—why? While the United States, Western European powers, Israel and the U.N. Security Council have embraced a “two-state solution” as the basis for peace in the Middle East, BDS leaders, such as Ali Abunimah and Omar Barghouti, are clear: They openly and outspokenly oppose a two-state solution. Why?

Because when BDS supporters talk about “the occupation of Palestine,” they refer not to disputed West Bank territories, but to *all* the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea—including all of Israel. When they talk about “freedom,” they don't mean freedom from security roadblocks, they mean freedom from Jews in their midst. When they talk about “occupation,” they mean *not* just Israeli security forces in the West Bank, they also

mean Israelis “occupying” the state of Israel.

The third telling fact about the BDS movement is that it consistently and vehemently opposes any efforts to bring Israelis and Palestinians together to work in peace and on peace. For example, BDS leaders advocate boycotting cultural exchanges between Israelis and Palestinian artists. They condemn educational cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian universities. Most revealingly, they *oppose peace talks* between Israel and the Palestinian leadership, calling them “collaborationist.”

BDS is not about “occupation.” In short, BDS is not about peaceful coexistence or ending the “occupation” of the West Bank.

Indeed, Omar Barghouti, a graduate student at Tel Aviv University and BDS founder, admits, “If the occupation ends . . . would that end support for BDS? No it wouldn't—no.”

Not only do BDS leaders admit this, but they implacably support the “return” of nearly five million *descendants* of Arab refugees who left during Israel's war of independence in 1947. In fact, most of these Palestinians are not truly refugees—fully 95 percent of them have never set foot in Israel.

Most importantly, the immigration of millions of Arab refugees' descendants to Israel would make Jews a minority in their own state. As President Obama has correctly noted, “The ‘right of return’ would extinguish Israel as a Jewish state, and that's not an option.” Yet destroying Israel by flooding it with millions of Palestinians is precisely what BDS leader Barghouti insists upon: “This (the right of return) is something we cannot compromise on.”

BDS's goal: “Extinguish Israel as a Jewish state.” BDS unequivocally rejects Israel's many peace offers—including numerous land-for-peace proposals supported by the United States—and rejects Israel's willingness to sit down to direct peace talks without preconditions.

Thus, the facts make BDS's intentions clear: Rather than being a movement that seeks peace and freedom, it is a movement motivated by an obsessive hate of Zionism and Jews and opposition to the Jewish state—one bent on fomenting strife, conflict and enmity until Israel is utterly defeated.

Rather than a movement that seeks peace and freedom, BDS is motivated by an obsessive hate of Zionism.

If you support peace between Israel and the Palestinians, if you support two states for two peoples—living side by side in cultural, social and economic harmony—please oppose the ill-intentioned BDS movement in your community. Speak out against hateful, one-sided campaigns to boycott Israeli goods, to divest from companies that do business with Israel and to enact sanctions against the state of Israel. This is not the path to peace!

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they'll be just part of the furniture?" They are doubtful.

Then there's the question of birds, an important question. This corner of Nebraska is rich in birds, rife with birds—including waterfowl. Not just geese but such exotica as pelicans. The skies above are a "flyway," a path for migrating birds. Wind turbines are no friend of birds. James Delingpole, the British writer and anti-wind crusader, refers to them as "bat-chomping, bird-slicing eco-crucifixes." Turbines kill something like half a million birds a year in the United States.

In December, the Obama administration issued a telling ruling: Wind farms would be permitted to kill eagles with impunity for 30 years. One congressman, Doug Lamborn, a Colorado Republican, called these permits "licenses to kill." A senator, the Louisiana Republican David Vitter, said that the permits seemed "unpatriotic."

Wind power is held to be almost sacred by some Americans. In 2011, the Obama administration brought suit against several oil companies in North Dakota. The reason: A handful of birds—between 25 and 30—had died in reserve pits. But wind power can do no wrong, apparently, even where our national emblem, the bald eagle, is concerned.

Some people are shocked and disgusted at the sight of an oil derrick—which is up for 20 to 30 days and then replaced by a simple, unobtrusive pump, which moreover is painted to blend in with the landscape. Once the well is dry, the pump goes away, leaving the land just as it was before

the drilling. Wind turbines, however, stay, loom, and rust. Pipelines, meanwhile, burrow underground. Everyone has a preference, aesthetic and otherwise.

Dennis Rasmussen, a member of the Nebraska Public Power District board, will take pipelines over wind farms any day. The problem, he says, is that "there's so darn much politics" in any discussion of energy. Political passion takes the place of reasoned consideration.

In February, a Nebraska judge, Stephanie F. Stacy, struck down the Keystone route approved by Governor Heineman. More precisely, she struck down the law by which Heineman gave his approval. She said that it violated the state's constitution. The winning lawyer in this case was David Domina, a Democrat running for the U.S. Senate. The state's attorney general, Jon Bruning, is appealing Stacy's decision to the Nebraska supreme court. That appeal could take many months.

President Obama will take many months, too: His administration announced that it is putting off consideration of Keystone XL indefinitely. The main reason cited was the Nebraska litigation. So, KST—Keystone Standard Time—continues to prevail.

Obviously, some people think of wind power as "next." The company that put in Steele Flats calls itself "NextEra." One of the most zealous anti-Keystone groups calls itself "NextGen Climate Action." Something will replace oil, in the fullness of time. But I'm not sure it will be wind. Right now, wind is responsible for just 4 percent of the nation's electricity. It is a vanity project—a moral-vanity project. I also think it may prove a fad, not unlike the pet rock or lava lamp. In the opinion of Dennis Rasmussen, wind will not long survive the loss of a subsidy.

Of all the facts I know, one of my favorites is this: A key ingredient of a wind-turbine blade, such as the one I saw on the flatbed as I entered I-80, is petroleum. Even the "alternative" is depending on the oily stuff.

Cynthia Milligan jokes that people far into the future might come upon wind farms and wonder at them as we moderns wonder at Stonehenge. What were people in the early 21st century doing with these giant turbines? Trying to communicate with their deities? I think of a movie title, "The Gods Must Be Crazy." In our energy politics, the gods are a little crazy, or someone is. **NR**

Poet of Self-Pity

The baleful influence of Gabriel García Márquez

BY DAVID PRYCE-JONES

GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ lived and died in Mexico City, and there he has received a sendoff that could have served for a head of state. A funeral cortège brought the urn with his ashes to a plinth in the Bellas Artes Palace. Eulogies were then given by Enrique Peña Nieto and Juan Manuel Santos, presidents respectively of Mexico and Colombia, the country where García Márquez was born. Juan Manuel Santos had special thanks to offer: "Eternal glory to the man who has given us glory." Thousands of people filed past the urn to pay their respects. Three days of national mourning have been decreed in both countries, with flags at half staff. In living memory no writer anywhere in the wide world has been so honored.

National presidents are prone to claim glory, and Colombia is certainly in need of it. Assorted Marxist guerrillas and terrorists have been struggling with paramilitary groups and drug cartels for the best part of half a century. Cocaine is the country's chief product and source of income. Fear for his personal safety impelled García Márquez to move to Mexico. His contribution to glory is the literary gimmick of "magic realism." Familiarly nicknamed "Gabo," he was awarded the 1982 Nobel Prize and praised as the pioneer of a cultural renaissance in Latin America.

Literature serves the purpose of showing that actions have consequences, and causes have effects. Great writers one and all have something to say about this inescapable fact of the human condition. Magic realism is the reverse, resting on the supposition that there are consequences without any need for action, and effects that have no causes. In one of García Márquez's novels, a woman goes out of doors to hang her laundry out to dry, only to ascend physically to heaven. In another novel, the fully dressed corpse

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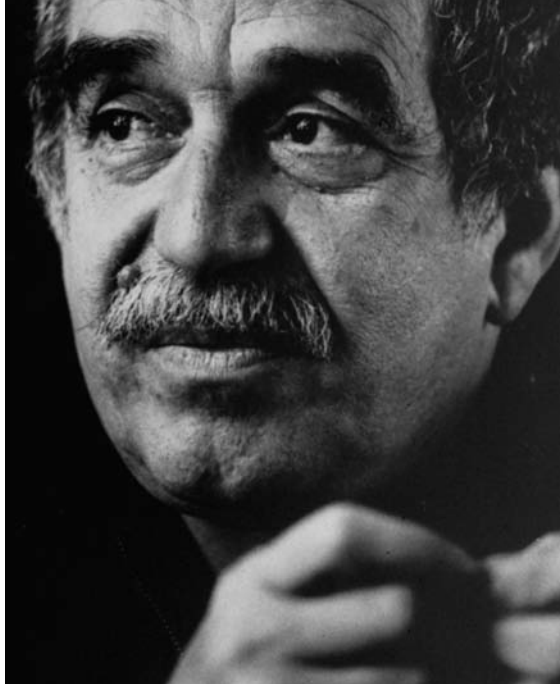


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of a general is brought in on a silver tray, cooked with “a garnish of cauliflower and laurel leaves,” and ready to be served to the guests at a banquet by a host who says, “Eat hearty gentlemen.”

Suspension of the normal operation of cause and effect leaves reality at the mercy of whimsy. Here are some random illustrations of the sort of prose that follows from this approach. “Children and adults sucked with delight on the delicious little green roosters of insomnia, the exquisite pink fish of insomnia, and the tender yellow ponies of insomnia, so that dawn on Monday found the whole town awake.” “Octopuses swam among the trees,” and “In December, when the Caribbean turned to glass . . .” A man has “an indefinite age somewhere between 107 and 232 years.” (Why not 233?) A woman has been changed into a scorpion for having disobeyed her parents. The absence of specifics renders such sentences not merely unlikely but so abstruse that they could be interchangeable anywhere in any text. The most extreme of his novels consists of competing interior monologues in this vein: “I accept for this short time your noble hospitality while the justice of the people brings the usurper to account, the eternal formula of puerile solemnity which a while later he would hear from the usurper, and then from the usurper’s usurper as if the God-damned fools didn’t know that in this business of men if you fall you fall, and he put all of them up for a few months in the presidential palace, made them play dominoes until he had fleeced them down to their last cent . . .” and so on for another two pages without a period. Writing comes down to word-spattering. García Márquez stands in the same relation to literature as Jackson Pollock to painting.

There is something more harmful still. Magic realism posits that powerful irrational forces are at work and people can do nothing about them. Events cannot be foreseen, behavior is unpredictable, and definitions of good and bad, right and wrong, are variable. That woman hanging out her laundry could not save herself, and those guests were obliged to be cannibals. When there is a plague of insomnia, or the Caribbean turns to glass, people can only feel sorry for themselves. García Márquez’s magic realism caught on be-



cause it plays into the self-pity brought on by political failure. Dictatorship has been the historic experience of Latin Americans. The unseating of every dictator has been a bloody episode of violence ending usually in the triumph of another dictator who leaves helpless people to make what they can of him.

García Márquez wrote a dramatized account of the last days of Simón Bolívar, the prototype dictator, and generals and colonels and patriarchs figure throughout his fiction. Members of his family belonged to conventional political parties, but like many Latin-American intellectuals he turned to Communism. This was to meet violence with violence, and, had Communism succeeded, it would have been only another version of dictatorship. In the years of the Cold War, García Márquez was a classic fellow traveler, approving the Soviet Union loudly or disapproving quietly. He was a frequent visitor to the Soviet Union and the People’s Democracies in Eastern Europe. Evolving into an ornament of the international Left, he hobnobbed with the like-minded Mikhail Gorbachev, General Torrijos of Panama, Graham Greene (who envied him his Nobel Prize), and the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. His Russian translator maintains that García Márquez and Fidel Castro were friends long before the Cuban revolution, and that Castro gave him financial support. García Márquez used to argue that Cuba was not a Soviet satellite but achieving its own brand of socialism in the face of a hostile and aggressive United States. A regular visitor to Castro, he claimed that the two of them talked about literature as one intellectual

to another. If you can believe that, as the Duke of Wellington said in another context, you can believe anything. Castro killed, imprisoned, and drove into exile a far greater number of victims than did Augusto Pinochet in Chile, but at one point García Márquez was proclaiming that he would not publish another book until Pinochet was overthrown. Here was magic realism in action: Dictatorship is good for some, bad for others.

Magic realism has a clear political purpose in García Márquez’s *The Autumn of the Patriarch*. The United States is depicted in that novel as a huge impersonal and irrational force. American ambassadors do nothing but assert, “Either the marines land or we take the sea.” They mean it literally: “They took away the Caribbean in April, Ambassador Ewing’s nautical engineers carried it off in numbered pieces to plant it far from the hurricanes in the blood-red dawns of Arizona, they took it away with everything it had inside.” America is simply brute power, and for those helpless before it the only conceivable response is self-pity. Even American presidents internalize the naked anti-Americanism. Bill Clinton finds García Márquez “the most important writer of fiction in any language.” For President Obama, “the world has lost one of its greatest visionary writers—and one of my favorites from the time I was young.” The eulogies in Mexico, the crowds attending the funeral cortège, and the tens of millions who buy his books testify heartfelt satisfaction that one of their own, a man with talents recognized everywhere, is telling them that self-pity is natural and justified. That’s the source of glory.

It doesn’t have to be like that. A mysterious incident occurred back in 1976, when Mario Vargas Llosa punched García Márquez in the street and gave him a black eye. Nobody knows what the two Latin-American future Nobel Prize winners were quarrelling about; it may well have been some private issue, but they are genuine opposites. Vargas Llosa ran for president in Peru; he didn’t win the election, but made it plain that actions have consequences and that there are peaceful political ways to be rid of dictators and be free from self-pity. Magic realism is never going to get the job done. **NR**



Inequality and The Fate of Capitalism

An impressive work of scholarship invokes a dubious idea from Marx

BY SCOTT WINSHIP

THOMAS PIKETTY topped the Amazon.com charts in America just shy of 150 years from the publication of volume 1 of *Das Kapital*.

Karl Marx would have scoffed at the possibility that by the turn of the 21st-century capitalism would produce a society in which books and products of every variety would be available to people of any income almost instantaneously. He predicted that wealth would accumulate and accrue to a shrinking number of people over time, to the point where inequality would destroy capitalism. Now comes Piketty, in a weighty tome titled to evoke *Kapital*, to warn that the “Marxist principle of infinite accumulation” may not have been completely wrong after all. Levels of wealth concentration today and in the future will not lead to socialism. But they could nevertheless become “socially destabilizing,” he argues, as capitalism in the context of slow growth could lead the wealthy to “ultimately devour all of national income.”

The reception that Piketty’s book, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, has received in the U.S. speaks to the irrational obses-

sion with inequality that has gripped the American Left. A recent *New York Times* analysis showed that the buzz around the book has come mostly from rich liberal states along the Boston-to-Washington corridor. By contrast, Americans as a whole, in recent polling by the Pew Research Center, ranked inequality third in importance out of four fundamental economic issues, way behind unemployment but also significantly behind the national debt (and ahead only of inflation, which has been at fairly typical levels).

To read the fawning reviews by liberal researchers and journalists, one could be forgiven for thinking Piketty had written a book irrefutably demonstrating that inequality really is, in President Obama’s words, “the defining challenge of our time.” But he has done no such thing.

Capital in the Twenty-First Century describes a past and present that concern the Left, and sketches out a beyond-iffy worst-case scenario for the future that makes progressives tremble with some combination of fear and thrill. It is an important book, but missing from its 700 pages is a serious argument about when and why inequality should be worrisome. Piketty’s wealth- and income-concentration trends are problematic as

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indicators of rising inequality. And the apocalyptic future Piketty paints as “possible” is an almost laughably rough guess that is the social-science equivalent of the direst scenarios envisioned by climate-change doomsayers.

The bulk of *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* is devoted to describing and explaining very long-run trends in wealth and income. These estimates were mostly developed by Piketty and his colleagues during the past 15 years and represent an invaluable contribution to the economics profession. Piketty’s discussion of these trends is invariably informative and thought-provoking, even if he often worries about them without much in the way of justification. Scattered throughout are wonky-but-accessible diversions into measurement issues and economic controversies related to labor, taxation, and inequality. You will learn a lot from this book.

But you will also be prodded to believe that capitalism may very well be doomed unless we rein in inequality. This is the thesis in service of which Piketty marshals his impressive data. And, of course, it is why the book has been so heartily embraced by the Left.

Before getting to the details of *Capital’s* argument, let’s address the Marxism issue. Is Piketty some flavor of Marxist? Paul Krugman and others have mocked conservatives for suggesting it. Piketty is pretty far to the left by American standards: In the book, he advocates a tax rate of 80 percent for income above \$500,000. He also advised French presidential candidate Ségolène Royale in 2007, when Royale was the nominee of the French Socialist party. One cannot help but sense some nostalgia in his writing for the severe interventions in the economy, including the nationalization of assets, undertaken by a number of countries during and after World War II. In one passage he describes a debate between socialist and “bourgeois” economists. And Piketty really does believe that Marx may prove prescient in predicting that, unchecked, wealth accumulation will be radically disruptive to capitalism. “Where there is no structural growth,” he writes, and “productivity and population growth . . . is zero,”

capitalists do indeed dig their own grave: either they tear each other apart in a desperate attempt to combat the falling rate of profit . . . or they force labor to accept a smaller and smaller share of national income, which ultimately leads to a proletarian revolution and general expropriation. In any event, capital is undermined by its internal contradictions.

Piketty does not share Marxists’ desire to heighten the contradictions of capitalism so that we can arrive at socialism, but he shares Marx’s hubristic suspicion that capitalism is a threat to itself rather than an engine for broadly shared prosperity through mutual exchange. In this, he is firmly of a piece with the American Left.

So, are they right? Piketty argues that in capitalist countries, the return to wealth (r) tends to exceed the rate of growth (g) of the economy. In the most basic sense, this improbably famous “ $r > g$ ” tendency means that the share of national income workers receive as compensation (“labor income”) falls and the share of income going to owners of wealth (“capital income”) rises. Because capital income is less equally distributed than labor income, these dynamics will

increase the share of income received by the top 1 percent. Finally, if the wealthy reinvest most of their returns, wealth inequality will also rise. It’s a triple-whammy.

How does Piketty reach these conclusions? He has a simplified model of how the economy works that, if we accept all of the assumptions entailed in it, produces the result mathematically. If the economic growth rate g falls relative to the savings rate, then wealth will become a bigger multiple of national income (savings rates are assumed not to adjust as people accumulate more and more wealth). Unless the return to wealth r falls more than the wealth-to-income ratio rises, then by definition the share of national income going to asset holders rather than workers will rise. And unless inequality in capital income falls enough, income concentration will increase. Lastly, if consumption using the additional income produced by wealth is sufficiently low, then asset holders will reinvest enough of their returns to increase wealth concentration further.

The basic problem in Piketty’s argument lies in those ifs and unlesss and in the infirmity of his assumptions. Piketty thinks economic-growth rates will be low because population growth has declined and because productivity growth will remain sluggish. Of course, others, such as Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee, believe we are on the cusp of a productivity breakthrough, which would push the economic-growth rate up and reduce wealth as a multiple of national income (barring a corresponding increase in savings).

Piketty believes that if the wealth-to-income ratio rises, as he suspects it will, then the return to wealth, r , won’t fall enough to offset it, leaving capital’s share of income to grow with wealth. But he thinks this only because trends in the capital share of income in France and the U.K. have historically moved in the same direction as the wealth-to-income trends (albeit not as dramatically). He presents no evidence on returns to wealth in the U.S., and while he nods toward the possibility that r can be affected by political and institutional factors, he seems not to think that they will be enough to lower the return to wealth in the future (unless we heed his policy prescriptions, which involve a global wealth tax).

At the same time as he minimizes growth in g , he seems confident that r will rise. Piketty concedes that the return to wealth may have declined slightly over the long run—and by more after taxes are taken into account. But he nevertheless says we “cannot rule out the possibility” that it will rise.

Agnosticism about an increase in the return to wealth is one thing; slipping such a rise into one’s projections is another. One of Piketty’s charts projects that after capital taxation, r will rise and exceed g , as it has for most of modern history, inspiring Piketty’s fear of exploding wealth concentration. However, a less-celebrated figure projects that the pre-tax r will be lower in the future than today. Piketty’s post-tax projection leads to exploding wealth concentration only *because he has assumed that taxes on capital will disappear* in the 21st century. Take away that assumption, and economic growth rates will still exceed the after-tax return to wealth through mid-century. (And that does not even take into account the fact, left unmentioned by Piketty in his discussion of these charts, that taxes and transfers will also work to make the disposable incomes of the middle class and poor grow faster than labor income alone. Inequality looks worse when you fail to take into account the ways in which democratic capitalism ameliorates it.)

What about the assumption that inequality of capital income will grow? We lack very good data on trends in capital-income inequality, partly because of difficulties measuring capital gains (the appreciation in the value of tradable assets) and losses. The tax-return data used by Piketty for the ubiquitously cited income-inequality estimates he has developed with Emmanuel Saez count capital gains only if they are reported on tax returns, which generally means only when they are taxable and realized. Excluding non-taxable capital gains means that most wealth accruing to the middle and working class, which comes in the form of home sales or 401(k) and IRA investments, is invisible in Piketty's data. Moreover, because tax returns count all gains when they are realized and members of the top 1 percent strate-

U.S. over the 20th century). Capital's share of income has increased since the 1960s, and capital-income concentration and income concentration generally have probably grown since the 1970s (though by less than Piketty believes).

These quantities often follow each other in the ways predicted by Piketty's model, but not always, and there are other explanations for the rise in these inequalities. In his research with Zucman, Piketty finds that asset prices have increased faster than consumer prices (a possibility ruled out by his model), and that can account for anywhere from none of the rise in wealth relative to income between 1970 and 2010 to 58 percent of it, depending on the country. My favorite alternative puts cultural factors front and center. The ubiquity of the male-breadwinner

Perhaps because Americans live in a world where deprivation is rare by historical standards, research on **policy preferences across income groups** tends to find similar positions and priorities among rich, middle class, and poor.

gically time the sale of their assets after holding them for years, all of the gains accruing over time are counted on a single tax return in years close to asset-market peaks. This increases the share of capital income accrued by the top of the income strata, since it's concentrated in one year.

The issue of measuring capital gains affects the broader income-concentration estimates used by Piketty. There are other problems with his measurements: Tax filing by dependents with after-school, summer, or college jobs makes the bottom ranks of the income ladder look much poorer than they are. Employer-provided health insurance—a rapidly rising share of worker compensation—is missing from the data. And as with the capital-share-of-income estimates, Piketty's income-inequality figures do not account for the primary ways in which we address income inequality: through progressive taxation and transfers. Research by Richard Burkhauser and his colleagues suggests that once we account for many of these issues, income concentration may have actually fallen somewhat between the business peaks of 1989 and 2007. To be sure, this result stands in contrast to most research on income concentration, but it is one of only a few papers to grapple seriously with capital gains.

Piketty also presents evidence on wealth-inequality trends. In the U.S., according to estimates from Saez, wealth concentration peaked in 1930 and fell up through the early 1980s. From about 1980 onward, new estimates from a "preliminary" PowerPoint by Saez and Gabriel Zucman, another Piketty colleague, contradict the trend shown by Piketty, with Piketty's estimates suggesting little change but Zucman and Saez showing a steady rise in wealth inequality. At this point, in other words, we don't really know whether wealth concentration has grown in the U.S. or not.

Piketty's fans have ignored criticisms of his data and mocked critiques of his model by saying that in fact the model predictions align with what countries have experienced, so the model has proven its worth. But the model is consistent with the facts only in a very broad sense. Wealth has risen as a multiple of income in some places and times (but it was pretty flat in the

ideal in developed nations in the 20th century may have directed overpayments to male workers and away from top earners and capital. As married women began working more after World War II, the rationale for these "economic rents" disappeared, and through a societal recalibration, income may have been redirected upward to the top (as well as sideways to women).

WHY should we care about the inequalities Piketty highlights? It is a question that to a remarkable extent goes unanswered by Piketty and by the American Left. Piketty ultimately falls back on folk theories of how economic inequality affects democracy, which are not spelled out with the rigor that characterizes his economic research. Wealth inequality, he fears, will "radically undermine the meritocratic values on which democratic societies are based." He goes so far as to evoke Haymarket Square and wonders: Will "this kind of violent clash between labor and capital belong to the past, or will it be an integral part of twenty-first-century history?" Piketty even worries about increasing total wealth in a world with stable wealth inequality, because then "the owners of capital . . . potentially control a larger share of total economic resources." "In any event," he says of higher wealth levels per se, "the economic, social, and political repercussions of such a change are considerable."

Inequality mongers are so hung up on income and wealth gaps that they lose sight of how much better off the middle class—and even the poor—are today than in 19th-century Chicago. Piketty describes the dramatic long-term improvement in living standards experienced around the developed world in Chapter Two of *Capital*, but by Chapter Six's discussion of the capital-labor split, it has long been forgotten.

Perhaps because Americans live in a world where deprivation is rare by historical standards, research on policy preferences across income groups tends to find similar positions and priorities among rich, middle class, and poor. Workers are not so desperate that they will take bullets to advance their class

interests—which increasingly resemble the interests of those at the top.

Inequality also doesn't appear to have hurt the incomes of the poor or middle class in the way Piketty claims. Income growth in the U.S. began to slow in the 1970s, even for the richest taxpayers, years before the top 1 percent's share started rising. Piketty's tax-return data may in fact have misled him into thinking that incomes have actually been in decline over the long run—they indicate a drop of \$3,500 for the bottom 90 percent of taxpayers in the U.S. between 1979 and 2012.

That drop stems from the inclusion of retirees in the tax data but the exclusion of their Social Security benefits, from the omission of other government transfers and the failure of the data to account for falling taxes, from the conflation of tax returns with households, from overstatement of inflation, and from a neglect of declining household size. My own estimates from household-survey data indicate that middle-class incomes for a family of four rose by more than \$10,000 after taxes and transfers (without even considering the value of health insurance). Among families with a non-elderly head, middle-class incomes rose by nearly \$10,000 *before* taking into account taxes or transfers.

Research is split as to whether rising inequality corresponds to slower economic growth. The only study of which I am aware that looks at whether increases in income concentration hurt middle-class incomes, by sociologist Lane Kenworthy, finds that there is no apparent relationship. Inequality can promote middle-class income growth by enlarging the size of the economy.

As noted by several economists commenting on *Capital*, because the returns to wealth will remain robust only if productivity growth does, Piketty's own model suggests that rising inequality will be accompanied by improved living standards for workers. It follows that his proposals to mitigate the increase in inequality would narrow economic gaps but leave real worker compensation lower than it would have become otherwise. This is a tradeoff Piketty and the Left do not recognize, do not acknowledge, or somehow prefer.

What is striking about the preeminence that the American Left and Piketty have given economic inequality is not that they must necessarily be wrong about its social and economic costs. Rather, it is that they are so adamant that they are right despite the absence of strong evidence. There is a parallel here with the climate-change debate, another liberal obsession. As Jim Manzi has written in these pages, it is a fairly well-established fact that human activity is causing global temperatures to rise. But there is little reason to believe that the consequences of global warming will be as dire as Al Gore wants you to think, and using the worst-case scenario as a guide to policy will have great, potentially unnecessary, costs. Buying into the doomsday scenario about inequality presents similar risks.

Thomas Piketty knows that big thinkers before him—Marx, but also Thomas Malthus and David Ricardo—have been proved badly wrong by their predictions of capitalism's ultimate demise. "In retrospect," he writes, "it is always easy to make fun of these prophecies of doom." Piketty has written a landmark work describing the past, but in proving unable to resist predictions about the future, he has exposed himself and his new friends on the American left to just that sort of future ridicule.

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Obamacare Among the Mennonites

*They can conscientiously object to war,
so why not the HHS mandate?*

BY BRANDON MCGINLEY

Lancaster County, Pa.

WHEN I meet Anthony Hahn, president and CEO of Conestoga Wood Specialties Corporation, he is carrying a Bible and a copy of the "Confession of Faith and Congregational Guidelines" for his branch of the Mennonite Church. On shelves in the conference room is a small library of business tomes: *Handbook of Modern Finance*, *Financial Valuation: Businesses and Business Interests*, and the 2003 handbook of Generally Accepted Accounting Principles.

Faith and business have been part of the Hahn family's experience since 1964, when Anthony's father, Norman, and Norman's brother Sam began a small woodworking firm across the street from the company's current headquarters. Anthony isn't blind to the tensions between his identities as Mennonite and businessman. "Amassing wealth," as he put it, doesn't make sense in a cosmological order in which this life is temporary and the fullness of life is in heaven. But "God blessed us with this company," he says, and it requires their stewardship here and now.

The Hahns have been privileged to live in a country that allows them to maintain these dual identities, and even to place their faith identity above all others—"We are Christians first." Whatever tensions exist have been resolved in reasonable ways that suit the family and its Mennonite faith tradition.

But now Anthony and his family and their company have gone before the Supreme Court of the United States, defending their right to organize the company according to their religious values—their right to be Christians first. (One of the Hahns' attorneys is my colleague at the Pennsylvania Family Institute.) The Hahns object to the abortifacient qualities of some of the "preventative" drugs they are obligated to include in their employees' insurance under the Affordable Care Act. For the first time, the family is being forced to decide between its business and its faith.

We can say, without falling into patriotic mythmaking, that America began as a home for the homeless. For Mennonites, as well as other religious believers, this was true both physically and spiritually. The history of this particular strand of Anabaptists was one of hopping across Europe from persecution to persecution, staying in one place only as long as the

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local authorities would tolerate them. The last stop for a large number of Mennonites was an infant America, and specifically William Penn's free domain west of the Delaware River.

For this people rooted more in shared faith than in shared geography, Pennsylvania's Lancaster County has provided centuries of relative stability. But even here, among these preternaturally verdant rolling fields, they do not feel truly settled. This world "is not our home," Anthony Hahn told me. "We are sojourners."

The sentiment of spiritual homelessness can be a difficult one for a nation to accept. It implies an allegiance to a power greater than the state and its laws; even the potential of conflict between these allegiances limits the authority of the state. And yet as recently as 1946 the Supreme Court declared that toleration of precisely this attitude is essential to the American project. In *Girouard v. United States*, which overturned previous rulings by holding that pacifism must not be a barrier to the naturalization of an immigrant, Justice William O. Douglas asserted that being an American does not exclude commitments higher and greater than the American state:

The struggle for religious liberty has through the centuries been an effort to accommodate the demands of the State to the conscience of the individual. The victory for freedom of thought recorded in our Bill of Rights recognizes that in the domain of conscience there is a moral power higher than the State. Throughout the ages, men have suffered death rather than subordinate their allegiance to God to the authority of the State. Freedom of religion guaranteed by the First Amendment is the product of that struggle.

And so the Mennonites, physical and spiritual sojourners, have had a physical home that has tolerated their spiritual homelessness. In the Hahn family, as in any Mennonite family, this relationship has manifested itself in the ability to be conscientious objectors to military service.

The one concept that continues to unite Mennonites—liberal or conservative, progressive or traditional—is pacifism. Whereas for most American men who are coming of age, the draft is a wisp of a notion that arrives and passes around the 18th birthday, for many Mennonites, non-military national service is part of growing up. Though there hasn't been a draft in more than a generation, the Hahns' Keystone Conference of the Mennonite Church sends young adults on service trips around the country as part of its commitment to "alternative service."

It's a delicate balance to strike between religious liberty and the national interest, but for American Mennonites, a people peculiarly set apart, that balance has been deftly achieved. They can participate in American life in every way, including business (though you won't see many Mennonite legislators or police officers—directly wielding the power of the state is prohibited), while remaining spiritual sojourners beholden first to their faith.

But now, after generations of declining to conscript members of the Hahn family for military service, the federal government is attempting to conscript the family and its business into the service of an administration's health-care agenda.

THE Hahns' lawsuit over the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) mandate introduced a new tension into the family's relationship with its faith. Mennonites



are not to use the law, which is considered an instrument of force, in their dealings with others; Christian charity ought to prevail. But in the case of the mandate, Anthony Hahn identified a moment in which "man's laws and God's laws conflict." The lawsuit, then, is an appeal to a higher form of "man's law"—the Constitution, or, more accurately, the Constitution viewed through the lens of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act—to vindicate the family's right to follow God's law first.

It's a use of the Constitution that would delight America's founders and first settlers—not to mention the religious-freedom champion William Penn. But this right—to follow one's interpretation of divine law above the civil law—is not absolute. No one who argues for religious liberty thinks such liberty ought to be limitless. If it were, we really would be left with "every citizen [as] a law unto himself," as Justice Scalia put it in *Employment Division v. Smith*, the case in response to which the Religious Freedom Restoration Act was passed. The real debate is over where, exactly, that limit ought to be.

For pacifists like the Hahns, there's a certain ridiculousness to the fight over the HHS mandate. What kind of serpentine line between the freedom of conscience and the rule of law could place opting out of military service in times of national emergency on the former side, and providing free abortifacient drugs and devices on the latter side? Certainly a government that can override conscientious objection to providing contraception can also override conscientious objection to taking up arms in defense of the country. For now there is a national consensus in favor of permitting conscientious objection to warfare; it would be absurd to argue that forcing a family-run corporation to pay for abortifacient drugs rises to the same level of national interest.

And there's good reason for that consensus: We recognize that letting conscientious objectors avoid military service imperils no other foundational right or privilege of American citizens. The marginal impact on military capabilities is overwhelmed by the absolute harm done to an individual's conscience, and therefore to one of this nation's founding principles. Supporters of the HHS mandate muddy the waters by asserting a new fundamental right that is harmed by objectors such as the Hahns—not just the right to use contraceptive and abortifacient drugs and devices, but the right to be given those items free of charge. Even if this were a right worthy of our consideration, it would evaporate when brought into contact with the essential right of conscience.

This juxtaposition isn't a constitutional argument, to be sure. A constitutional right to object to military conscription has never

been articulated, though the Supreme Court has ruled that non-religious objections must be considered as valid as religious ones. Rather, this is an argument about the type of nation we want to be. Will we be a country that looks at any appeal to an authority above the state as suspicious or even seditious, or will we be a country that allows plenty of room for religious motivations even if we find them strange?

This isn't new territory for the Hahns; Mennonites are accustomed to being seen as a little odd. Though the concentration of coreligionists in Pennsylvania Dutch country has allowed the family never to feel totally out of place, the idea of nonconformity is a running theme in my conversation with Anthony. Christians are not called to follow their faith privately, he maintains, but to live boldly in a way that demonstrates, without showiness, the eternal truths that motivate them. This entails nonconformity with the prevailing culture in any age, but particularly in one as secular as our own. At Conestoga this means, for instance, that all business—even that of delivery trucks—stops on Sunday.

But the state abhors the craggy cultural landscape that results from conspicuous nonconformity. The great sociologist Robert Nisbet referred to the “sealing” power of the state, which fills in fissures of cultural diversity in order to create an artificial but more easily manageable uniformity. Families such as the Hahns, groups such as the Mennonites, and places such as Lancaster County form a few of the innumerable fissures in American cultural life that make our society not just more interesting but more dynamic, more free, and more humane. The present administration's handling of the HHS mandate reminds us of the continuing threat that these fissures will be progressively sealed off.

For his part, Anthony is coy about his family's prospects in the cabinetmaking business, allowing that he is “concerned about the future of Christians in business.” Though he has received unsolicited support from within his industry for standing up for his beliefs, it's not clear how long that will last. He foresees “serious hurdles” even if the Supreme Court decides in his family's favor.

Mennonites are not the only religious group for which America is a resting place rather than a final destination. Any faith that holds out the hope of joining in divine transcendence must regard this life from the perspective of eternity. “You have formed us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in You” as Saint Augustine famously addresses God at the beginning of the *Confessions*. No sincere religious believer ought to feel perfectly at home here, even in the Land of the Free.

And so perhaps there's something suitable about this emerging state of affairs, in which religious Americans are viewed with suspicion and even hostility by the state and its lackeys. Perhaps it would make a political and social reality out of what is already a spiritual reality. Perhaps Christians and Jews and Muslims and whoever else rejects the state's preeminence should be restricted in their participation in the life of the state. Perhaps.

But is this really the country we want? One where the state imposes a flat and featureless cultural landscape? Where orthodoxy is a political concept in addition to a religious one? Where Anthony Hahn is told that he can have the Bible or the *Handbook of Modern Finance* but not both?

No, I don't think that's the country we want. Not yet. **NR**

Into Syria, Out of Syria

A report from among the persecuted

**BY JORDAN ALLOTT AND
ANDREW DORAN**

Near the Turkish–Syrian border

‘C A va?’ Sabri would ask periodically, breaking the tense silence with French. “Oui, ça va.” He would then return to his thoughts, taciturn, intense. The three of us sat in his idling car in the Turkish border village in the dark as the winter rain streamed down. After traveling and living widely in Europe, Sabri, an Assyrian Christian from Iraq, returned to the land of his birth to bring his fellow Christians humanitarian aid from the outside world. He had crossed into Syria several times but would do so this time against the wishes of his family, who called him even here at the border, pleading with him not to go. There we waited for Sabri's contact, a Kurdish guide who would take us, over the next two days, by foot across *la frontière*—a muddy maze of fences, concertina wire, and possibly worse—into Syria.

As dark silhouettes passed, we tried to keep our imaginations in check. We had come to the Middle East to document the realities facing the region's surviving Christian minority and now found ourselves confronting some of their challenges. Earlier that week, we had soberly considered the various scenarios—border patrols, snipers, kidnappers, uncleared landmines—and trigger-happy Turkish border guards would not be the worst case. We had already discussed the possibility of being captured and killed by al-Qaeda and asked Sabri to assign a percentage to the likelihood of our getting over and back safely. The interpreter asked him in Syriac, a dialect of Aramaic common to many Christians of the Middle East. “Danger est danger,” Sabri replied in French, with a chuckle.

“He is a great man, a courageous man,” an Iraqi Christian had said of Sabri just days before. “He is a hero for our people.” After many conversations about whether the crossing was feasible in the inclement weather, we decided to push ahead. Some months before, Sabri had taken two Western journalists across; they were later kidnapped. “I think of them every day,” Sabri's wife told us, before imploring us yet again not to go. “Qaeda,” she said. It was one thing to hear it uttered thousands of miles away on a newscast, where it sounded removed and abstract; it was something else altogether to hear it here.

Northeast Syria, predominantly Kurdish and quasi-autonomous for roughly a year, had witnessed the struggle against the forces of Bashar Assad's regime give way to fighting against Islamist militants from Saudi Arabia, Chechnya, Europe, and elsewhere. They had already killed many Christians and

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would kill many more. Once we crossed the border into Syria, Sabri would take us to meet with some of the Christians facing that fate—huddled together, we imagined, helpless and hunted. We had come to the Middle East to document the challenges Christians face in their ancient homelands; with each passing moment, more doubts crept in. It had been raining for nearly two hours. As it began to taper, a young man approached—our Kurdish guide, Mehmet, a slender fellow in his early twenties. Quickly we were off on the five-mile trek across the border.

Mehmet set off at a relentless pace. The mud was inches deep and quickly caked onto our shoes, making each step a struggle not to slip. A thick fog descended on the no-man's-land, and soon the village's lights were no longer visible, with nothing but mud and fog-enveloped darkness all around. The landscape was littered with jagged rocks, scarcely detectable beneath us. We saw now why Sabri had sought to postpone the excursion. A wrong step could be perilous here for any number of reasons, unswept landmines not least among them. We neared a wall of stones, piled like the dry stone walls of the British Isles. Winded, we caught our breath for a moment, kicking the mud from our shoes on the rocks. As we stood to resume, Sabri whispered an admonition to be absolutely silent and stay low to the ground.

After more than an hour, we came to a 15-foot-high structure of barbed and concertina wire: the Syrian border. Mehmet turned right, walking in the muddy tire tracks, and then left, darting through a small hole in the wire. He held it back, helped us through, then smiled and whispered a welcome in Kurdish. We resumed the rapid pace across the muddy, rocky ground. Gunshots rang out in the distance—the pop-pop-pop of a Kalashnikov. Unable to see, we pressed on. After some time, we came to another stone wall, from which a Kurdish man emerged. He greeted us and joined us for the rest of the trek. Finally, we came to a village, where we happily set foot once again on concrete. Soon we were ushered into the back of a parked van, where we joined several armed men. Steam rose from our clothes and we caught our breath as they checked our passports. Once we had passed their inspection, we were off. A few minutes later, we arrived at our destination, a town inside northeast Syria.

UNDER fog and a curfew, the town seemed deserted, shrouded in darkness and silence. We were escorted into a building full of men, most of them in combat fatigues, armed with Kalashnikovs—the headquarters of the Syriac Military Council. Sabri and several of these men smiled and embraced like old comrades, saying, in Syriac, “Khoura” (Brother). Sabri had tried to arm more Christians in the area, but most had refused. “Did they refuse for reasons of faith or prudence?” Drew Bowling, our companion in the Middle East, had asked a contact before our journey. “For faith, I think,” he said. On the wall in the building we saw a statue of the Virgin, and an image of Jesus. Hospitality ensued, consisting, naturally, of Turkish coffee, tea, and cigarettes. Here we had found Syria's Christians—those who had not fled or been killed or sought protection from the regime in Damascus—not huddled together helpless but armed and fighting.

As we sat by the fire, the hand of the local Christian military commander, a bearded man in his forties, reached across to grab hold of an exposed cross Andrew wore. In a grave tone, he said, “Qaeda!” He then dragged an index finger along his own neck, with a grisly sound effect. The room exploded in macabre laugh-

ter. As Andrew reached to conceal the cross, everyone in the room lunged forward to say, “No!” The message was clear: Yes, the cross may cost you your life, but it should not be hidden.

The military commander showed us a map of current engagements against al-Qaeda, its affiliate al-Nusra, and ISIS, which is known locally as “Dash.” Battles were ongoing in the nearby villages of Qamishli, Tel Hamis, and Hasakeh. These Christians—part of the Syriac Military Council, formed in early 2013—fought alongside the Kurds. Much like Iraqi Christians, Syrian Christians stand side by side with their country's Kurds, non-Arabs who tend to be more secular politically, members of a nation that exists everywhere but on a map.

Here by the fire, the nation-state construct seemed a Western delusion, an absurdity. Opinion about the Syrian government and Assad was mixed; while there is much enmity between the regime and this region, government forces have largely withdrawn from al-Hasakeh, as Kurds and Christians fight their principal enemy, al-Qaeda and its affiliates. “Syriacs were scared of Assad until now,” explained Gabriel, a Christian affiliated with an international organization promoting non-violence, but “now we have nothing to lose as a people. As individuals we can be jailed, tortured, persecuted and killed. But as a people, we have nothing to lose.” It is a sentiment heard often among these Christians.

Once a city of more than 25,000, the town appeared to have less than half that number in the daylight. The power worked only sporadically, and there was little food and still less medicine. Inside Council headquarters, a middle-aged woman waited. “People come here for basic medical supplies,” said Gabriel. “We have none to give them.” Medical and other supplies entering from Turkey are often seized by al-Qaeda affiliates, who operate with less resistance from the Turkish government (which is only too happy to help wreak havoc on its old enemy, Assad) than one might expect. Supplies often arrive as we did, surreptitiously. We were told that most of the doctors, possessing more means than others, had left with their families. There are few hospitals in all of the Hasakeh region.

Many of those with whom we met asked us to explain why America's government is so keen to deal with Islamists. “We Christians have a secularist mindset,” said Gabriel. “Islamists only think about religion. So the West should support us because we are easier to deal with.” This sentiment is ubiquitous not only among Christians from Cairo to Kurdistan but among moderate, secular-minded Muslims in the region. Our attempts to explain the prevailing trends of realpolitik were met with blank stares, as if to say, “This is not realism; it is madness.”

On the façade of a local church hung an image of two kidnapped bishops. The caption read, “Pray for them.” Inside, we met a refugee from Damascus, who described the destruction of his home and his flight from the southwest. “Refugees are coming from all over Syria to this area because they believe it's safer and they can get aid,” he told us. The Orthodox pastor had given him shelter and work in the church. At a local Evangelical church, the pastor was organizing relief for refugees from other parts of Syria. The pastor was generously giving out food, water, and medicine to the predominantly Sunni Arab refugees in this town where supplies were scarce.

Part of the impetus for forming the Council was to protect Christians, who no longer feel safe. Many of them wish to leave, which has stoked among their fellow Syrian Christians fears that their community will be dismantled. From the roof of the

Council's headquarters, one of the members pointed at a series of small houses on the street below, explaining to Jordan in broken English, "Christian, Christian, Christian." He then pointed off into the distance and said, "Gone!" Though they discourage their fellow Christians from fleeing, they do not prevent them. Those who remain hope that by contributing to the struggle against the extremists and the Syrian government, they can restore peace to their homeland. We discussed with Sabri the possibility of helping some Christians get out but never found the opportunity. We were content not to be burdened with the responsibility of bringing anyone safely across the border—which we were about to cross again.

AT sunset, we arrived at the staging area, the home of a Kurdish man near the border. In his diminutive abode, we sat on the floor with about ten others who would be fleeing their homeland for Turkey. An Arab Muslim man in his sixties with white hair smiled at us. "Salaam alaikum," we said. "Wa alaikum, salaam," he responded. "Ahlan, wasahlan." His wife sat beside him. In her arms was their four-year-old granddaughter. The child had curly, dirty-blond hair and a white scarf covering her mouth. She was winsome but expressionless—like millions of Syrian children forever marked by trauma. The Kurdish guide would take us all across the frontier after nightfall, out of Syria.

There was a silent tension in the room as we counted down the moments. Of course, we stood out among the travelers. Now we had a sense of how people feel coming into America from Mexico. The child coughed, a deep lung cough. Would it echo across the frontier? If we happened across the wrong people out there, they'd let the others pass. We knew what would happen to us. Smiling, the Kurdish children of the home brought us tea.

Outside, Sabri paced. A Kurdish man from Hasakeh told us about the battles against al-Qaeda. He was the second person to tell us that Assad's government forces had come to the aid of al-Qaeda's affiliates in some of the engagements in the northeast, apparently a cynical ploy to prolong the conflict. As we spoke, night fell, and a full moon waxed in the clear sky above, improving visibility on the frontier. Not good, we thought. And then we were off.

A hundred meters ahead, along one of the stone walls, we encountered a couple of dozen young men with makeshift boxes on their backs—smugglers, Jordan suspected. One of them screamed at the group in Arabic. There were suddenly many others. We looked at each other. No more English from here on out. The Kurdish guide, a compact, rough man in his forties, over-seeing a group of ten, beckoned us to move along swiftly.

The ground had dried since our initial crossing, but the footing was still treacherous. The Syrian grandparents were carrying their granddaughter and their bags. The grandmother, short and stocky, was struggling to traverse the jagged rocks and mud; the grandfather, now wearing his red and white checkered keffiyeh (the headdress of Arab men), held the child in his arms.

We marched in silence, accompanied by a sense of urgency and the sound of heavy breathing. The old man tired. "Tamman?" (You okay?) He nodded, but he was clearly winded. After a few minutes, he relented, and we took turns carrying the child. Now, in addition to our bags and theirs, we carried the burden of responsibility for the only thing that mattered to this old couple.

It proved impossible to keep up with the rest of the group, the Kurdish guide, several Arab and Kurdish men, and the family—

ten of us all told, moving as fast as we could. Being left behind was not an option, but keeping up was impossible. It was clear that the guide was afraid. In the darkness, we looked at the child—beautiful, silent, stoic. Whether through trauma or courage, she was unafraid. We had discussed bringing Christians with us, if they wished to come. Now we were helping Sunni Muslims escape Syria—the Syria of Bashar Assad and al-Qaeda.

We crossed the wire into the Turkish side of the no-man's-land. A loud voice suddenly echoed across the frontier. Who would be unafraid to be heard out here? That's someone to fear, we thought. The sense of urgency gave way to desperation as we heard stomping footsteps behind us—the smugglers were sprinting. What are they running from? What do they know that we do not? Is something coming behind them? With the family's bags on our backs, and the child in the arms of one of us and then the other, we fell behind. The grandfather took the child back, and again the guide came to hurry us along. The family could not keep up. With a deep breath, we looked at each other and whispered. "They're not going to make it. We have to help them." We stayed behind, keeping pace with the family. The searchlight of the Turkish border patrol flashed over the frontier.

We took the child back and continued on our way, winded, cursing that we were not in better shape. We saw a border-patrol vehicle only 50 feet away, driving parallel to us toward our destination. If it turned right, its bright lights would expose us. We ducked down and watched as the vehicle veered left and drove away, and heaved deep sighs of relief. When we were finally a safe distance from the border, the Kurdish guide approached, muttering. He grabbed us by our necks and planted kisses on our cheeks. As we caught our breath, the old man said something to the guide in Arabic and pointed to heaven, saying "Allah" several times. We could see the village ahead. After several hundred more meters, we arrived.

PARTING company, we kissed the child and bade farewell to her grandparents. Sabri extended his hand as we caught our breath. "Khoura," he said, laughing.

As we entered his home a short time later, his wife embraced us. We sat around the table, the long-lost travelers, returned. Songs were sung in Syriac, and spirits passed around. Although we were celebrating our safe passage into and out of Syria, we also realized that those Syrians who were lucky enough to escape alive would not be celebrating but anxiously wondering whether those they left behind would survive, and whether they themselves would ever return to their homeland. The translator instructed us all to kneel; Sabri, not terribly devout, eventually acquiesced with a smile. There we prayed the Our Father in Aramaic. We thought in silence of those who could not make it out, of those Westerners who had been captured, many of whom would never escape, and of the family whom we would never see again, whose names we did not know.

Syria's tragic war continues, with Assad starving his people and driving them into exile, giving rise to the next generation of terrorists. Al-Qaeda affiliates engage in internecine conflict, imposing a ruthless tyranny in the pockets where they reign. Everywhere, the innocent and helpless suffer, the fortunate escape, and millions more simply survive, trapped in the midst of a savage conflict whose conclusion is nowhere in sight. Christians are among the survivors in that war-ravaged land, no longer a nation. There we found them, embattled but alive. **NR**

Hashtag Diplomacy

FROM the Twitter account of State Department spokesperson Jen Psaki, April 2014: “The world stands #UnitedforUkraine. Let’s hope that the #Kremlin & @mfa_Russia will live by the promise of hashtag.”

From “#FAIL: A Brief History of Hashtag Diplomacy,” published May 2016:

From the beginning, Hashtag Diplomacy captured the technologically savvy attitude of the Obama administration. Crafted in the early years of the rise of social networks, the concept was meant to discourage international misbehavior by marshaling the power of people frowning at their cell phones and typing messages to their 38 followers, demanding that the right thing be done.

It had a difficult birth. The failure of the Iranian uprising was ascribed to the opposition’s failure to unite on a single hashtag—#freeiran, #green4Iran, and even #SRSLYMullaz? competed with many other variants, so the world’s opinion could not be marshaled under one concept. It was that conspicuous lack of coordination, combined with young men beating everyone with clubs, that led to the revolution’s failure.

President Obama was widely criticized for not supporting the demonstrators, but the administration was working behind the scenes to ensure that the revolution was not tainted by the appearance of American influence. Declassified papers reveal that a stealth branch of the administration’s Social Media Headquarters, or SMH, had set up over 47,000 fake Facebook accounts for the express purpose of “liking” photos of Iranian students who had been beaten by the regime.

“We had a discussion for a week about this,” said one unnamed official at SMH. “Some of the old State Department types thought that a ‘like’ expressed approval for the beating, but the younger kids knew it was a sign of support. The whole idea of ‘like’ and ‘thumbs down’ was too binary for State, anyway; if they’d invented Facebook, you’d just have a little animated blue outstretched hand that wobbled from side to side without committing to anything. In the end they produced guidelines for the use of a ‘like,’ but by then the revolution was over.

“We did, however, unfollow over 37 members of the Iranian government, and to this day I don’t think the administration knew about it. We were holding our breath during the nuclear talks of 2013, hoping no one on their side brought that up.”

The SMH was better prepared for the Egyptian revolution. By now NSA had developed programs that aggregated the trending hashtags and sorted by popularity; if #MubarakMustGo suddenly spiked, the SMH could seed retweets and mentions among its 12,457 followers. But there were problems still.

“We discovered some false-flag hashtags from the Egyptian government itself—#mubarakmustgo, all lowercase,” the official said. “There was a point in the Tahrir Square uprising where we had two competing versions,

neither popular enough to trend, and we thought the regime might hang on after all.”

This was perhaps the high-water mark of hashtag diplomacy. It would prove less useful in Syria, where the word “Assad” was constantly autocorrected into “ass ad,” complicating efforts to get the conflict trending. The SMH considered using animated GIFs of cats falling off tables and dogs running into walls to mobilize sympathy for rebel factions but then realized that the social-media community, not having any scenes of young people massing in squares to protest, really wasn’t concerned at all.

The Ukraine crisis pitted the SMH against Russia’s own online forces. In response to accusations that the Russian annexation of Crimea violated the spirit of solidarity expressed by social media, the foreign minister reportedly quipped, “You can’t spell ‘trending’ without some ‘rending.’” As news leaked of paramilitary groups active in Kiev, rounding up government leaders, the SMH released a hashtag that had been in the works for weeks: #UnitedforUkraine. People were supposed to attach it to Instagram photos in which they held up their first and pinky fingers to represent a “U.” Unfortunately, this gesture was also popular with Longhorn football fans and with heavy-metal enthusiasts who associated it with the devil.

“It may have slowed the tanks, but it didn’t stop them,” said one official. “I remember watching CNN the night they raised the Russian flag over the Ukrainian parliament, thinking, ‘If only we’d had a better hashtag.’ But you know, Ukraine’s tough to type. People get the vowels transposed.”

When Putin announced the absorption of Ukraine into the Russian Federation, a new determination seemed to flow through the SMH. Ideas came fast: Get people to change their online avatars to blue and yellow, Ukraine’s national colors. Impose massive sanctions against Russian-media YouTube channels, using dummy accounts to repeatedly hit the “dislike” button. Even cultural sanctions were targeted, as unfavorable comments were left on YouTube videos about the Hermitage (“boring and smelly just old pictures on the walls lol”).

It was certainly noticed by the Russian government, and perhaps there was something of false bravado when Putin asked, “How many divisions does Mark Zuckerberg have?” But in the end, the entire concentrated effort of social media failed to protect a single Ukrainian, with the exception of one fellow who escaped capture by security forces by throwing his phone hard at the head of his pursuer.

Where hashtag diplomacy goes from here, it’s not clear, but there are elements in Washington who grumble at the beliefs and conceits of the new generation, pointing to the old ways that served the nation well for decades.

“We’re not saying we want you to put the Free Ukraine bumper-sticker over the one about Tibet. Next to it, if you could. Together, it’s a powerful message.”

Questions were texted to Tibetan refugees, asking how they felt about sharing the all-important rear-bumper space. Responses were not available by press time.

NR

Mr. Lileks blogs at www.lileks.com.



The Long View

BY ROB LONG

NSA DOCUMENT EXTRACT: POTUS TELEPHONE INTERCEPTS

Begin Extract

07:37

POTUS: “I need you to stop hanging around with Republicans.”

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE VOICE: “What do you . . . what is this, Mr. President?”

POTUS: “I see you on the Instagram or whatever. Out and about. At campaign events. All over the place. And I don’t like that element. I don’t like it.”

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE VOICE: “Sir, with all due respect, do you know who you sound like?”

POTUS: “Do I—what? What?”

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE VOICE: “You sound a little like the owner of the L.A. Clippers, that guy, Donald Sterling?”

POTUS: “Don Sterling? What? What are you talking about? This isn’t a race thing! This is you appearing at campaign events with Republicans.”

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE VOICE: “Sir, with all due respect, I’m fighting for my Senate seat. Louisiana is a tough state for a Democrat and I’m—”

POTUS: “You should be with your own kind.”

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE VOICE: “I don’t understand. I don’t see your views. I wasn’t raised the way you were raised.”

POTUS: “Well then, if you don’t feel—don’t come to the White House. Don’t bring Republicans and don’t come.”

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE VOICE: “Do you know that there’s a whole house of Congress that’s Republican? That the Senate is in play?”

POTUS: “You just, do I know? I support them and give them tickets to the Kennedy Center and whatnot. Who

gives that to them? Does somebody else give that to them? Do I know that there’s a Congress . . . Who makes the government? Who makes the policy? Do I make it, or do they make it?”

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE VOICE: “I’m in a tough Senate race, sir.”

POTUS: “It bothers me a lot that you want to broadcast that you’re associating with Republicans. Do you have to?”

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE VOICE: “Do I have to? Yes! I’m ten points behind!”

POTUS: “I’m just saying, in your lousy Instagrams and your campaign literature, you don’t have to have yourself with, walking with Republicans. Don’t put them on Instagram or commercials for the world to have to see so they have to call me. And don’t bring them to my games.”

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE VOICE: “Games?”

POTUS: “Okay, forget that. That sounded a little Donald Sterling-ish. I take that part back. But only that part. The rest stands.”

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE VOICE: “Sir, I’m having a hard time understanding you. As I’ve said, I need to win this race. And that may mean taking a step away from you and your administration. Surely you can see that?”

POTUS: “I don’t see it that way. I don’t like you hanging out publicly with that element. I don’t like to see Republicans anywhere.”

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE VOICE: “That’s like saying, ‘Let’s just persecute and kill everyone who’s different.’”

POTUS: “You’re a mental case, you’re really a mental case. We’re comparing this with—”

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE VOICE: “Discrimination! Yes!”

POTUS: “There’s no discrimination here. If you don’t want to be . . . walking . . . into a campaign event with a Republican!”

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE VOICE: “You really do sound like the owner of the L.A. Clippers.”

POTUS: “Stop saying that!”

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE VOICE: “Okay, well, in one of those pictures I’m with Lindsey Graham. And I thought, you know, that that would be okay because he’s basically mixed, like me. He’s a RINO squish, so I thought that wouldn’t make you mad—”

POTUS: “But he’s one of *them*, don’t you see? He’s on the other side! It just looks dirty and wrong to see you with one of them.”

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE VOICE: “But isn’t that what voters are rejecting? This kind of partisanship? Isn’t that what our message should be when we head into the midterms? That we can build bridges and reach across the aisle?”

POTUS: “No! Don’t be crazy! There’s nothing we can do about that.”

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE VOICE: “But shouldn’t we take a stand for what’s right? And be the change and the difference?”

POTUS: “I don’t want to change the culture, because I can’t. It’s too big and too *[unintelligible]*.”

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE VOICE: “But you can change yourself.”

POTUS: “I don’t want to change. And if the senator from Louisiana can’t do what I want, I don’t want the senator from Louisiana. I’ll find a senator from Louisiana that will do what I want! Believe me. I thought you were that senator—because I tried to do what you want. But you’re not that senator.”

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE VOICE: “I’m really sorry, Mr. President.”

POTUS: “This may cause our relationship to break apart. And if it does, it does. It’s better to break apart now than to break apart later.”

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE VOICE: “Mr. President, are you jet-lagged?”

POTUS: “What? No! This conversation is over. Debbie, get me Senator Pryor!”

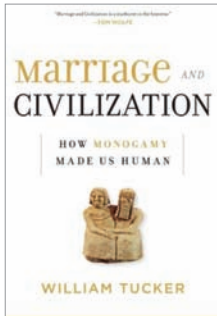
07:47

End Extract

Books, Arts & Manners

The Evolution of Marriage

RYAN T. ANDERSON



Marriage and Civilization: How Monogamy Made Us Human, by William Tucker (Regnery, 256 pp., \$27.95)

“**A** GIRL for every boy, a boy for every girl”: That’s the main thesis of William Tucker’s engaging new book. With polygamy, you see, there *isn’t* a girl for every boy, and the leftover boys must find some other—usually disruptive and frequently violent—way to pass their time. But the “unique social contract of monogamy—a male for every female, a female for every male—lowers the temperature of sexual competition and frees its members to work together in cooperation. It is at this juncture that human societies—even human civilizations—are born.”

Tucker is not himself an academic, but he is a smart journalist, and *Marriage and Civilization* is the result of some 20 years of reading through the scholarly literature on marriage and thinking through the implications. It’s written for “the average reader,” and covers some “subjects that many schol-

ars and academics in the field seem to find uncomfortable.” Indeed, Tucker comes to some rather politically incorrect views. His work is a clear-headed presentation of a “biological, anthropological, and historic understanding of the role that monogamy has played in the evolution of human society”—and by monogamy Tucker doesn’t simply mean any old union of two people, but an exclusive and more or less permanent union of a man and woman, husband and wife, father and mother.

Monogamy so understood doesn’t happen by chance. In a certain sense, “human monogamy—the pair-bonding of couples within the framework of a larger social group—is not entirely a *natural* institution.” After all, “monogamy does not sustain itself ‘naturally.’” And yet, when monogamy is lived out, human civilization flourishes. As Tucker puts it, “The rule is: those who form traditional families succeed; those who don’t fail.”

Because monogamy doesn’t grow on trees, “it requires rules—rules that must be continuously enforced by the members practicing it.” So, while “monogamy is manifestly a more equitable and successful way to organize a society, it is always under siege and forever fragile.” And if a society “becomes lax or indifferent about upholding its norms, the advantages will quickly unravel—as we are plainly witnessing in the America of today.”

Yet this isn’t what we witnessed in the America of mid-century. Men and women paired off, raised children as a unit, and more or less stuck together for life. To give just one statistic: Throughout the 1940s, ’50s, and early ’60s, percentages of births to unwed mothers were in the single digits. As Tucker notes, “the phenomenon of ‘single motherhood’ was virtually unknown.” In 1965, when the Moynihan Report was issued, the concern was that the out-of-wedlock birth rate for blacks was 25 percent. Today 40 percent of all children, 50 percent of Hispanics, and 70 percent of African Americans are born outside of marriage.

And this breakdown of marriage most hurts the least well-off. A leading

indicator of whether someone will know poverty or prosperity is whether, growing up, he or she knew the love and security of having a married mother and father. Marriage reduces the probability of child poverty by 80 percent. The reason is simple: Marriage attaches a child’s father to his mother, and then attaches that committed pair to the child. As Tucker notes: “Children without fathers are more at risk for drug and alcohol abuse, dropping out of school, depression, delinquent behavior, crime, early sexual activity, and having illegitimate children in the next generation. They are more at risk for abuse, molestation, and incest.”

“The art of fatherhood,” however, “does not come naturally but is a skill that must be passed on from generation to generation.” Citing the work of Charles Murray, Tucker points out that the upper class is still enforcing and living by the rules of social monogamy, while the lower and middle classes are taught “the message that marriage doesn’t matter, that illegitimacy is no big deal, and that there is nothing wrong with being on the public dole.”

Yet the bulk of Tucker’s book is concerned not with these contemporary issues, but with the deep biological roots of monogamy. Unfortunately his presentation of the literature isn’t as clear as it could be, as he tells a historical story of the academic study of these origins without clearly presenting which theories stand the test of time and which were passing fads that we must reject. Still, he tells an interesting story of how “polymorphous polygamy” in chimpanzee communities—a form of “sexual communism” where “every male gets to mate with every female”—transformed into human monogamy. Tucker discusses theories that argue that, without monogamy, “the evolution of the human brain would not have been possible,” and that various biological factors affecting fitness for survival of the group as a whole led to pair-bonding. Evolution, Tucker writes, isn’t so much a matter of “Kill or Be Killed” as of “Be Fruitful and Multiply.”

The idea is that high-status males are the big winners of polygamy, but an

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alpha male who mates exclusively with an alpha female gets assurance that she'll bear his—and only his—offspring, and she gets assurance that he'll stick around for the long haul to help raise the child and protect her from aggressors. The same is then true for the beta male and beta female, and gamma, “and so on down the line—much the way it happens in high school.” Monogamy is a form of what game theorists call “Nash equilibrium”: It does not maximize the outcome for each and every individual, but it does “optimize everyone's

and violence.” It is also a shame that the book moves from the founding of Rome to the French Revolution with only six pages on Christianity's influence on monogamy—a chapter without a single reference to Augustine or Aquinas—even while Tucker argues that “Christianity played *the* crucial role in making monogamy the norm in Western society.”

One topic that receives relatively little discussion is that of redefining marriage to include same-sex relationships. “From an evolutionary standpoint, gay marriage is a non-starter,” he

to be sexually open, why should it be limited to two people in the first place? The liberal online journal *Salon* in August 2013 posted a woman's account of her shared life with a husband, boyfriend, and daughter under the headline “My Two Husbands.” The subhead: “Everyone wants to know how my polyamorous family works. You'd be surprised how normal we really are.”

A certain type of polyamorous relationship has even motivated advocates to create the word “throuple,” which is similar to “couple” but with three peo-

Sadly, some of the push for redefining marriage has taken place precisely under the guise of an **anything-goes attitude**.

individual outcome in a way that maintains the integrity of the entire society.” And, more specifically, “monogamy usually emerges only where the demands of the environment require special care and protection for the young.”

This requires, of course, sexual restraint and the rules that make monogamy and fidelity possible. Tucker observes that humans have devised the “universal fig leaf,” as “social monogamy requires that some parts of our personalities remain forever hidden from the public.” After all, “every human society has created some form of marriage” that “requires the couple to pledge their fidelity to each other” and “also *draws a line* between the bonded pair and the group.” This is radically different from, for example, the behavior of the bonobos, who engage in sex as casually as humans shake hands. But “bonobos have remained chimpanzees. We evolved into something different. It is our sexual repressions that have made us human.”

Tucker goes through human history at blazing speed, and not just Western and Christian history: He also discusses monogamy in India and China, and polygamy in Mormonism and Islam. On Mormonism and Islam, I fear he moves too quickly and paints with too broad a brush, especially as he tries to defend “the link between polygamy

states. “It is only a few decades old and has played no part in evolutionary or human history.” Tucker takes no position in this book on same-sex marriage, but cautions those who do support it: Given the importance of social rules for sustaining social monogamy, he insists that “supporters of same-sex marriage draw a stark line . . . between acceptance of gay marriage and acceptance of an ‘anything-goes’ attitude toward marriage, which says that it makes no difference whether people tie the knot or live in sin, whether they marry a man and a woman or marry two wives or three wives.”

Sadly, though, some of the push for redefining marriage has taken place precisely under the guise of an anything-goes attitude. For example, a 2011 *New York Times* profile of gay activist Dan Savage, headlined “Married, with Infidelities,” introduced Americans to the term “monogamish”—relationships where partners would allow sexual infidelity provided they were honest about it. The article explained: “Savage says a more flexible attitude within marriage may be just what the straight community needs.” The story added that sexual exclusivity “gives people unrealistic expectations of themselves and their partners.”

Rather than striving for faithfulness to one spouse, some advocates argue for allowing marriage to be sexually open. And if marriage can be redefined

ple. The word appeared in a 2012 article in *New York* magazine that described a specific “throuple” this way: “Their throuplehood is more or less a permanent domestic arrangement. The three men work together, raise dogs together, sleep together, miss one another, collect art together, travel together, bring each other glasses of water, and, in general, exemplify a modern, adult relationship.”

If it's sexually open, and if it has multiple partners, why should marriage be permanent? An August 2013 op-ed in the *Washington Post* introduced the word “wedlease,” as the author wondered why marriage should be permanent when so little else in life is. Why not have temporary marriage licenses, as with other contracts? “Why don't we borrow from real estate and create a marital lease?” the author wrote. “Instead of wedlock, a ‘wedlease.’” He continues: “Here's how a marital lease could work: Two people commit themselves to marriage for a period of years—one year, five years, ten years, whatever term suits them. The marital lease could be renewed at the end of the term however many times a couple likes. . . . The messiness of divorce is avoided and the end can be as simple as vacating a rental unit.”

Whatever one thinks about the morality of sexually open marriages, multi-partner marriages, and by-design-

temporary marriages, the social costs will run high. The marital norms of monogamy, sexual exclusivity, and permanency make a difference for society. These new words and the reality they reflect undermine public understanding of what marriage is and why it matters for society.

At its most basic level, marriage is about attaching a man and a woman to each other as husband and wife to be father and mother to any children their sexual union produces. When a baby is born, there is always a mother nearby: That is a fact of reproductive biology. The question is whether a father will be involved in the life of that child and, if so, for how long. Marriage increases the odds that a man will be committed both to the children that he helps create and to the woman with whom he does so.

Marriage, rightly understood, brings together the two halves of humanity (male and female) in a monogamous relationship. Husband and wife pledge to each other to be faithful by vows of permanence and exclusivity. Marriage provides children with a relationship with the man and the woman who made them.

If a man does not commit to a woman in a permanent and exclusive relationship, the likelihood of creating fatherless children and fragmented families increases. The more sexual partners a man has, and the shorter-lived those relationships are, the greater the chance he creates children with multiple women. When his attention and resources are thus divided, a long line of consequences unfolds for both mother and child, and for society as a whole.

Tucker closes the book by posing a question: Will we honor marriage or will we create a “kind of ‘state polygamy’ where women congregate around the major source of wealth—the government—while men slink off into their separate quarters to pursue a fading warrior culture—played out this time on video games”? Will we honor the most noble aspect of human nature—one that doesn’t come “naturally” but requires work and rules to make us flourish?

In short, will we insist on the ideal of a girl for every boy, a boy for every girl—and a mother and father for every child?

NR

All-American

JOHN J. MILLER



John Wayne: The Life and Legend, by Scott Eyman (Simon & Schuster, 672 pp., \$32.50)

IN “Among the Euro-Weenies,” a classic report on European attitudes toward America in the 1980s, P. J. O’Rourke describes going to dinner in London. “Your country’s never been invaded,” sniffs a companion. “You don’t know the horror, the suffering. You think war is . . .” As he pauses to pick a condescending metaphor, O’Rourke selects one for him: “a John Wayne movie.” Rather than reject the idea, however, O’Rourke embraces and enlarges it: “We think *life* is a John Wayne movie.”

Apparently we still do. Earlier this year, Harris Interactive released its latest annual poll on America’s favorite movie stars—and there was Wayne, holding steady at No. 7, even though he’s been dead for longer than No. 3 star Jennifer Lawrence has been alive. It remains to be seen whether future generations will remember Johnny Depp or Brad Pitt as fondly, but clearly the hero of *True Grit* holds an enduring appeal. Scott Eyman thinks he knows why: “Wayne became more than a movie star for his time,” he writes in his excellent and definitive biography. “He became indivisibly associated with America itself.”

His career began with an American act of reinvention: A young man from Winterset, Iowa, abandoned a birth name that wasn’t quite fit for stage or screen, saving us the indignity of saying that we

think life is a Marion Morrison movie. In 1929, at the age of 22, he became John Wayne, a moniker chosen by a Fox director who admired the Revolutionary War general Anthony Wayne. “The ‘John’ seems to have been an afterthought,” writes Eyman. But it worked well, giving “the two halves of the name the equivalence of two blocks of granite that fit miraculously together.” Friends used a nickname from his boyhood: “Duke.”

His film career debuted off-screen, as he lugged props around studios and performed odd jobs such as “pasting labels for premium booze on bottles that actually contained cheap bootleg hooch for Fox executives who wanted to impress their girlfriends.” By 1930, however, Wayne had secured a starring role in *The Big Trail*, which was supposed to be a blockbuster western. When it flopped, Wayne descended from a world of big budgets and high expectations into a purgatory of cheap cowboy flicks. He spent most of the 1930s as a Hollywood jobber, earning a good living but always wondering if he’d have another shot at fame. His odds were bad. B pictures, writes Eyman, “were usually like the Mafia—once you were in, you were in for life.”

Then John Ford came to Wayne’s rescue. A successful director, Ford had wanted to cast Wayne in a suitable role for years—and in 1939, they made *Stagecoach*, their first great collaboration. Filmed among the boxy buttes of Monument Valley, it tells the story of several strangers as they ride through Apache territory, with Wayne playing a hero-outlaw known as the Ringo Kid. The film was a hit, and critics haven’t stopped raving: “*Stagecoach* had a mixture of reverie and reverence about the American past that made the picture seem almost folk art,” wrote Pauline Kael. For Wayne, it was a breakout role, and he knew his debt to Ford. “I simply owe to him every mouthful I eat, every dollar I’ve got, and practically every bit of happiness I know,” he said in 1946. Ford understood that the debt was mutual: “Duke is the best actor in Hollywood. That’s all.”

Wayne had a distinctive drawl, but Ford recognized another quality: “He was the only person I could think of at the time who could personify great strength and determination without talking much.

That sounds easy, perhaps. But it's not. Either you have it or you don't." For his part, Wayne believed that the best actors drew from personal experience rather than stage training: "If a kid came to me to ask me how to prepare for a screen career, I guess what I'd say would be to go to school, learn to handle liquor, mix with people, get into trouble, work in lots of different jobs, and always remember his reactions to things and people. That's the best equipment in front of a camera." Eyman cites James Baldwin, the essayist and novelist who contended that the great movie stars—Wayne among them—were naturals: "One does not go to see them act: one goes to watch them *be*."

Wayne and Ford would go on to make more than a dozen features together, including *Rio Grande*, *The Quiet Man*, and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. The best of the bunch, however, was *The Searchers*—"Wayne's greatest acting achievement," writes Eyman, in a role that's "too large for any genre but the western at its most mythical." It's a revenge saga, with Wayne as Ethan Edwards, a Civil War veteran who pursues a band of Comanches after they abduct his niece in Texas. Eyman is a little too drawn to recent interpretations of the film, which obsess over racial conflict, but he also appreciates the movie's real majesty as the study of a man whose frontier virtues are necessary for the spread of civilization but also a barrier to his subsequent assimilation into a genuine community.

When Wayne played a character, he usually played a version of himself: self-reliant, patriotic, capable, and courteous. He was also a conservative. In 1952, he wore a "Taft for President" button that was so big it attracted the attention of a young Barry Goldwater, who was visiting Los Angeles. Goldwater tried to persuade Wayne to switch his support to another Republican, Dwight Eisenhower, on the grounds that Ike could win. Wayne stuck with Taft, but he and Goldwater became friends. Years later, Wayne lent his name to a certain periodical's promotional mailings: "*National Review* is my favorite magazine. Why don't you give it a try?" (When Wayne received one of these letters addressed to himself, he scribbled a note to William F. Buckley Jr.: "Bill:

What do you need to be convinced? — Duke.")

Wayne's forays into film direction often included a political purpose. As early as 1947, he wanted to make a movie about the Alamo, turning the famous battle into a Cold War parable of American resistance to totalitarianism. *The Alamo* finally came out in 1960 to mixed reviews, including the common complaint that it featured too many speeches. A few years later, Wayne was walking on the campus of the University of Southern California, where he saw anti-war protesters heckle a young Marine over the Vietnam War. When he discovered the Marine had lost his arm, Wayne exploded in anger and accosted the students. The incident led him to make *The Green Berets* (1968), about Americans fighting for freedom in Vietnam. It was a commercial success but a critical disaster, threatening to finish his career among movie reviewers. Then Wayne rebounded the next year with one of his best performances, in *True Grit*.

When he wasn't making movies, Wayne was a man of surprising culture. He worked hard to become a good chess player. He enjoyed reading Winston Churchill and J. R. R. Tolkien. A person once saw him smoking and asked if he wasn't afraid of killing himself. "We are all under a sentence of death," he replied. "Bet you don't know who said that. Whittaker Chambers."

Many of Wayne's most admirable characters had their flaws, and so did Wayne himself. "For Wayne, a movie set was home, and he loved being home," writes Eyman. His actual home appears to have suffered from it. "I've been married all my life," Wayne once said. Then he clarified: "Well, not to the same woman, but I've been married all my life." His three marriages ended in two divorces and a separation. He seems to have felt lasting guilt for the failure of the first one, as well he should have: "Wayne had been indulging himself with actresses for years," among them Marlene Dietrich, reports Eyman. Moviegoers weren't alone in looking up to his onscreen persona: "I've played the kind of man I'd like to have been," he confessed.

Even John Wayne, it seems, occasionally wished that his life had been a John Wayne movie. **NR**

A Night at The Improv

STEVEN F. HAYWARD



The Triumph of Improvisation: Gorbachev's Adaptability, Reagan's Engagement, and the End of the Cold War, by James Graham Wilson (Cornell, 280 pp., \$29.95)

IN the early innings after the end of the Cold War, the media and much of the foreign-policy community wanted to give Mikhail Gorbachev the full credit for its surprising and abrupt end, portraying President Ronald Reagan mostly as a hindrance. After Gorbachev was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, Strobe Talbott's 5,000-word treatment in *Time* magazine's "Man of the Decade" valentine devoted but a single sentence to Reagan, chiefly to shove him offstage. But as was the case with Eisenhower, another Republican president dismissed as a simpleton during his time, subsequent revelations about Reagan spawned a significant upward revision even among many liberals. Princeton's Sean Wilentz, no friend of conservatives generally, wrote in 2008: "[Reagan's] success in helping finally to end the Cold War is one of the greatest achievements by any president of the United States—and arguably the greatest single presidential achievement since 1945." This revisionism is taken as vindication of what conservatives knew all along: Margaret Thatcher

Mr. Hayward, the author of The Age of Reagan: The Conservative Counter-Revolution, 1980–1989, is the Ronald Reagan Distinguished Visiting Professor at Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Public Policy.

was right when she said Reagan won the Cold War without the firing of a single shot.

The revisionism about Reagan, however, has deepened rather than resolved a number of puzzles about him, and Gorbachev also remains out of focus in some important ways. Although it is unlikely that major new revelations or startling archival documents will appear in the future, revisionism about the Cold War's endgame is likely to grind on for a long time because new interpretations will propose intuitive and speculative insights into the contradictions and unknowable innermost thought processes of Reagan and Gorbachev. This is a tall order, requiring a combination of biographical and political genius, qualities that are almost as rare as genuine statesmanship.

As his title suggests, James Graham Wilson, a historian at the State Department, embraces the theme of "improvisation" to explain the Cold War endgame. Wilson focuses on a quartet of actors, including George Shultz and George H. W. Bush along with Reagan and Gorbachev. His compact narrative—just 204 pages of text—proceeds in disciplined chronological order, which restrains the sort of sweeping and dubious generalizations that often mar other treatments of the Cold War's last decade. Wilson is sparing and careful in his judgments; some are astute, others more contestable.

Readers can never know whether publishers have cut down a manuscript, but we could use a longer account from Wilson, as his narrative leaves us wanting more depth on some key points and doesn't unravel some of the mysteries of Reagan. To his credit, Wilson displays none of the usual subtle condescension that often seems obligatory in writing about him. Reagan "was not the cowboy his critics alleged," Wilson says right at the outset, adding that "Reagan as statesman now commands a presumption of greatness."

But it is less clear that the concept of "improvisation" presents a genuinely "new direction" for understanding the end of the Cold War. All statesmanship, like battle, involves a large amount of improvisation. Historians and biographers share with politicians the conceit of mastery over events, and we flatter ourselves that we can reduce causation to single narra-

tive dimensions: It was all Gorbachev! It was Reagan's cunning master plan! It was the materialist dialectic in reverse! To paraphrase Churchill, first we shape our narratives, and then our narratives shape us. Real political life is almost always more chaotic and less in the control of government leaders than we think.

Wilson is quite right to call into question the two leading monistic narratives, Reagan Triumphalism and Gorbachev Triumphalism. Wilson rightly notes the central contradictions of Reagan: a fierce anti-Communist who also wanted to negotiate real arms control; someone who perceived Soviet leaders as rigid Marxist-Leninist ideologues, but who could also appeal to them sentimentally as normal human beings (the Soviets no doubt found these two sides of Reagan deeply confusing); the person who set off hardliners in his inner circle against supposed moderates such as Shultz. Wilson describes all of these tensions well, but we get no closer to figuring out how Reagan calibrated his flywheel.

Maybe we can't unravel those contradictions. Reagan was not introspective, and his diary offers only superficial clues about his thought processes. But he had an uncanny grasp of when to talk and act tough with the Soviets, and when to be conciliatory. He knew he needed both factions—hardliners and engaged negotiators like Shultz—in his tent. But somewhere was a fine sense of judgment scarcely visible even to intimates. Reagan's deeper subtlety might be seen in a comment he once made to Bud McFarlane—not included in Wilson's narrative—that while he could fire Shultz and make Cap Weinberger secretary of state (a job Weinberger coveted), he'd get bad policy. Wilson thinks that Reagan kept on Weinberger and other hardliners out of personal loyalty and refused to resolve staff clashes out of personal aversion to conflict, but this is too simple and is controverted by other evidence.

Wilson's "improvisation" narrative implicitly discounts the Reagan Triumphalism that is popular among conservatives, and while he doesn't heap scorn on the narrative as do many other writers, he does miss or skip over some evidence that lends some credence to the idea that there was more deliberateness than improvisation to Reagan's Cold War strategy. To be sure, there were few

people around Reagan who thought out loud that the U.S. might win the Cold War inside a decade, and even Reagan himself said the night the Berlin Wall came down that while he expected the end of Communism, he never thought it would happen so soon. But there were in fact some perceptions—especially in CIA deputy director Herbert Meyer's prescient 1983 memo to Bill Casey and Reagan—that the U.S. might be on its

ONE LIVED AND ONE DIED

Young men and cars offer
the joy of coming of age
with the risks of tragedy.
There is the monstrous injustice
of the death, banal statistical
references, and life goes on.
And the loss goes on. It does not end.
Prayer and afterlife, meaning beyond
anything a parent, or loved one,
or considerate passerby, can suggest
have their value, and comfort.

See the pain in a different way,
with a deeper understanding,
within the heritage of experience
each soul builds as life goes on.
Fine. Even helpful. The loss remains.
It is immutable, irreconcilable,
full of a despair suffering a
random, heartless god, or none,
nothing, just the void of death.

But it is the loss that is the void,
not the death; courage can come
from it, cultivated in memory
or little rituals of remembrance
as a survivor's stiff duty, possible
by the edge of love that is not
some stepchild of despair,
that is a force of its own.

As to the young man who lived,
the car destroyed, walking away
with barely a scratch, another
car, another year, another day;
there is no answer to that, either,
only the great, inexplicable
mercy of a second chance.

—WILLIAM W. RUNYEON

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TUE/Nov. 11	AT SEA			morning/afternoon seminars
WED/Nov. 12	St. Thomas (USVI)	9:00AM	6:00PM	afternoon seminar evening cocktail reception
THU/Nov. 13	St. Maarten (NA)	8:00AM	5:00PM	afternoon seminar late-night Smoker
FRI/Nov. 14	AT SEA			morning/afternoon seminars "Night Owl" session
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way to winning the Cold War in two or three decades, and for reasons that turned out to be precisely correct.

There are other places where Wilson's admirable restraint leads him to debatable judgments. He thinks that Reagan's "evil empire" rhetoric "had no bearing on the coming of Mikhail Gorbachev." This requires much more argument. Reagan's critics in the early 1980s complained loudly that Reagan's hardline rhetoric and uncompromising arms-control policy would strengthen

publicly at the time that Gorbachev conceived his intent as being in continuity with Churchill's great theme, and this is an instance in which Wilson's even-paced narrative does not convey the full drama and significance of the moment.

One important departure from most treatments of the Cold War endgame is Wilson's detailed discussion of the aftermath of Reagan under President George H. W. Bush. Bush is often left out of the story, and Wilson is right to concentrate more fully on Bush's actions from 1989

There are places where Wilson's admirable restraint leads him to debatable judgments.

Kremlin hardliners and make any future thaw in relations impossible, but there is contemporary evidence—chiefly from people Wilson discounts, including William Clark and Richard Pipes—that this tough stand in fact made it more likely that a liberal reformer would come to power after the Brezhnev generation expired.

Gorbachev was that liberal reformer, and while Reagan's rhetoric may not have affected Politburo thinking (though I think it did), Reagan's critics were surely refuted by this succession. Wilson's "improvisation" thesis fits Gorbachev very well, and Wilson may not have gone far enough in appreciating the deeper factors behind Gorbachev's often erratic course. "The Politburo," Wilson rightly notes, "would never have chosen Gorbachev to lead the country in 1985 had its members possessed any inkling of the reforms he would adopt—especially if they had known that so many of these reforms were destined to fail!" Gorbachev did not have unlimited freedom to improvise.

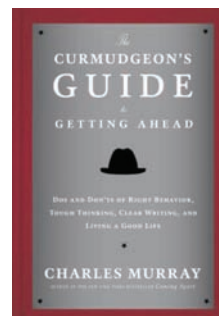
Wilson does bring to our attention one episode of the Gorbachev story that remains underappreciated: his decision in December 1988 to announce more or less unilaterally that the Soviet Union was throwing in the towel on the Cold War. Most significant was that Gorbachev conceived his United Nations speech as "Fulton in reverse"—that is, an announcement that the Iron Curtain should soon be lifted. It was not known

to 1991. Wilson thinks that "when walls came down, Bush was better suited than Reagan to set the terms for Cold War victory," and Bush's much ridiculed "prudence" is certainly congruent with Wilson's "improvisation" theme. But Reagan was just as restrained as Bush on that November day when the Berlin Wall suddenly came down, appearing on ABC's *Primetime Live* clearly not inclined, as were many conservatives disappointed with Bush, to do a sack dance in the end zone of Communism.

While the course changes and adjustments that Wilson narrates can carry the "improvisation" theme, it is less clear that they support a finding of inconsistency on the part of any of the four principals in his book. Improvisation fits Gorbachev best; less well Reagan, Bush, and Shultz. A practical synonym for "improvisation" is "muddle," and much of the entire Cold War story from the beginning was often a tale of muddle and blunders followed by recovery and adjustment. Perhaps the endgame story can't really be understood except in continuity with the whole scene stretching back to the 1940s—a thought Wilson suggests briefly at the end—and it could easily have taken a different and more ominous course had other figures been in charge in the Kremlin. Even Wilson's lean narrative cannot escape conveying the near-miraculous nature of it, and even if his cautious judgments can be contested, there is no slighting the miraculousness of this epic. **NR**

Old School

CHARLOTTE HAYS



The Curmudgeon's Guide to Getting Ahead: Dos and Don'ts of Right Behavior, Tough Thinking, Clear Writing, and Living a Good Life, by Charles Murray (Crown Business, 144 pp., \$17.95)

I'm, like, digging Charles Murray's new book, which grew—at the suggestion of his colleague Karlyn Bowman—out of in-house tips on grammar and usage for super-smart kids working at the American Enterprise Institute. But oops! A Murray dictum we can all second: "Excise the word 'like' from your spoken English."

I urge you to bestow a copy of this valuable book upon every graduate you know this June. The premise of the first half of this slim volume is that Murray is a curmudgeon much like the ones a new graduate will encounter in the world of full-time work, unless she is seeking a future in the entertainment or IT fields, in which case her boss will likely be young or pretending to be so. By the way, if you don't know why I used "she" instead of the grammatically abhorrent "they" with a singular verb, an all-too-common usage nowadays, please consult pages 37 and 38 in *The Curmudgeon's Guide*.

"Technically speaking, a curmudgeon is an ill-tempered old man,"

Charlotte Hays is the director of cultural programs at the Independent Women's Forum and the author, most recently, of When Did White Trash Become the New Normal? A Southern Lady Asks the Impertinent Question.

Murray admits. “I use the term more broadly to describe highly successful people of both genders who are inwardly grumpy about many aspects of contemporary culture and make quick and pitiless judgments about your behavior in the workplace, and don’t hesitate to act on those judgments in deciding who gets promoted and who gets fired.”

Some insecure Baby Boomer bosses pretend not to be curmudgeons. Instead of helping ambitious younger

asks. May I brand the next non-cattle rancher who uses this term in my presence?

In this brief book, Murray manages to hit almost all the verbal tics that are so infuriating that their repetition may drive me to an early grave: “unique” used to mean special rather than the one and only; the confusion of “less” with “fewer,” and—the *pièce de résistance* in the grammar hall of shame—misusing the word “literally.” I recently heard the director of a Shakespeare play going on

which one might be more widely seen. Don’t even ask for a rationale on the tat-too front, because “it does no good to remind curmudgeons that tattoos have been around for millennia.” Bravo!

The book’s first half deals with presenting oneself on the job, the second with the formation of the self and living a happy life. When I interviewed Murray many years ago, when his 1988 book *In Pursuit of Happiness and Good Government* came out, I was struck by his entirely secular attitude. Something has changed. While still an agnostic, Murray, who attends Quaker services with his wife, is “shakier” in his non-belief, and counsels: “Take religion seriously, especially if you have been socialized not to.” He also counsels taking marriage seriously.

Murray’s final tip is to watch the movie *Groundhog Day*, about a smug TV weatherman who disdains a small town but after getting stuck there learns not to be a conceited jerk. Not being disdainful is the cornerstone of Murray’s advice for success at work and happiness in life. I may not get around to rereading Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, which Murray says is the longer version of *Groundhog Day*, but I have a permanent place for *The Curmudgeon’s Guide* on a shelf beside my copy of *The Elements of Style* (which Murray heartily recommends). I love its crisp, firm tone, reminiscent of *Elements* but with a bit of Miss Manners and a serious consideration of the cardinal virtues thrown into the mix. As I might have put it before reading this book, “Like, this is going to be a classic, dude.” **NR**

Not being disdainful is the cornerstone of Murray’s advice for success at work and happiness in life.

employees by not being stodgy, they may inadvertently create minefields for unwary twentysomethings. Good tip: If your boss asks you to call him “Bill,” don’t do it the first time. If—heaven forbid—Bill really wants callow youths half his age to use his given name, he’ll ask again. However, “if Bill is a closeted curmudgeon, his opinion of you will rise” if you continue to call him Mr. Smith until he really means for you to adopt a more informal usage.

A surprising number of senior executives, Murray writes, care deeply about the English language, even if they are in businesses that are not normally thought to require impressive writing skills. Curmudgeons are likely to write off young employees who use words sloppily. It would therefore be wise to avoid “reaching out” and “sharing” when what you mean is inviting or telling. Thank you, Mr. Murray, for addressing my pet peeve: “branding.” When people talk about branding—which, alas, they do all too often in my world—they mean trying to promote themselves distinctively. Murray recalls that branding originally meant a trademark burned into a product, or, with animals, the flesh. Well, that would certainly be distinctive. “Why would you aspire to be labeled and defined so that your subsequent behavior must conform to the ‘brand’ that you have established?” Murray

asks about how we “literally” get to see Henry V growing up before our eyes. Now, *that* would be an awfully long production.

As much as I like Mr. Murray’s tips, I regret that he didn’t address what I regard as the most horrific (and revealing) grammatical error afoot in the land: “he,” “she,” and “I” for “him,” “her,” and “me.” It isn’t the uneducated but graduates of good schools who nowadays say, “I gave it to Jim and he.” This betrays a certain unfamiliarity with grammar—and thus with the process of thinking itself. This curmudgeon’s tip: The nominative (“he,” “she,” “I”) acts, the accusative (“him,” “her,” and “me”) is the object that is acted upon, and the dative is a receiver, or indirect object (“him” again). Please, give it to Jim and him. Confusing the subject and its object or indirect object comes under the heading of what my dear, late mother liked to call “a dead giveaway”—a seemingly minor error that reveals heretofore hidden depths of depravity.

That some of the tips on self-presentation must be given at all is a sad commentary on Baby Boomer parenting. “First, abstaining from casual obscenity gives you the aura of an adult,” Murray writes. No kidding. Murray also takes on “piercings, tattoos, and hair of a color not known to nature.” Such decorations are fine for the mailroom but not for a position in

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Film

Sister from Another Planet

ROSS DOUTHAT

A VAN cruises the darkened streets of Glasgow. The driver is a woman in a fur coat, with lustrous hair and red pillows for lips. Sometimes she pulls up next to men and asks for directions, chit-chats a little with them, and, if they turn out to be alone, headed to nowhere in particular, offers them a lift. Then there's some flirtation, an invitation back to her place, which leads to a sultry slow-walking striptease, in which she retreats into the darkness and the men, tumescent, follow her, stripping in their turn. It's only when they're naked that the floor beneath them turns viscous, then liquid, and they sink away into the dark—their eyes, until the liquid closes over them, still fixed on her.

She is Scarlett Johansson. She is also a space alien.

The movie, *Under the Skin*, is the second recent film to divide Johansson's sexual persona against itself, to alienate her mind and heart from her extremely famous body. In Spike Jonze's *Her*, she was a throaty voice without a form, a virtual consciousness who longed to be enfleshed. Here, under the direction of Jonathan Glazer, she is a mind enfleshed, but her flesh is not her own: She is a non-human consciousness wearing a (luscious) human body, using it to perform a specific task (in which the lusciousness is helpful), and regarding her form—at first, at least—as a mere tool, rather than an identity.

The movie's plot, as sketched above, sounds a lot like an art-house remake of *Species*, the gynophobic mid-1990s horror-thriller in which Natasha Henstridge picked up men at L.A. nightclubs and then turned into a clawed-and-tentacled predator after sex. But Johansson's visitor isn't here for predation of that sort: She doesn't mate with her victims, she just collects them, with a motorcycle-riding courier assisting her, for some



Scarlett Johansson in *Under the Skin*

grisly form of experimentation or exploitation that happens at a remove from her own work. She isn't a praying mantis devouring her lovers; she's more a naturalist collecting specimens for someone else to study and dissect.

In the novel on which the movie is based, her character has an explicit identity and purpose: She's collecting men for an otherworldly race that has the same palate as the aliens in the "To Serve Man" episode of *The Twilight Zone*, who fatten and butcher us and serve us up as steak. But Glazer's film removes those details, and their satirical edge, and leaves things more ambiguous—and thus, I would say, more disturbing. (The one shot of what happens to the men in the liquid is memorable, and not in a pleasant way.)

But this is an existential horror film, so the grisly fate of the Scotsmen entrapped by an alien soon cedes center stage to the fate of the alien herself, as she gradually gives in to a mission-altering fascination with her adopted form, her semi-humanity, her unexpected connection to the species she's supposed to be collecting.

At first, her detachment from our concerns seems as absolute as our detachment from the fate not even of animals, but of insects. In a scene more unsettling than any of the science fiction, she goes about the business of acquiring a human

specimen while ignoring—and furthering—a horrific family tragedy involving a beach, a riptide, and a toddler. (Consider yourself warned.)

That detachment frays the more time she spends in our world, watching us and listening, surrounded by our bodies and our buzz. The turning point is an encounter with a badly deformed man who has to be coaxed into believing that a beautiful woman would even talk to him, let alone touch him: Thereafter, her identity as a hunter gives way, and she becomes an explorer, a refugee, and eventually, predictably, prey herself.

The movie has been much praised, for Johansson's alienated-yet-affecting performance and Glazer's direction alike, and the praise is understandable. *Under the Skin* is haunting, frightening, mood-altering, and simply unusual—a strange, distinctive object unlike anything else on screen right now.

But if you asked me, *did you like this film*, the answer would be mostly "no." The mood is ultimately oppressive; Johansson's nudity, however aestheticized and un-erotic, is still exploitative; the deliberate unsettledness and unpleasantness of what's on screen feel too much like ends unto themselves. The movie felt like a dark dream—one from which, at the end, I was glad to have awakened.

NR

Into the Woods



RICHARD BROOKHISER

EVERY month I get a haircut; every decade my property gets a tree cut. This was a regular feature of old-time husbandry, as reflected in fiction or correspondence where one reads of landowners and their woodlots. In a famous letter, Machiavelli includes tending to his woodlot as part of his daily rural routine, along with hearing the gossip and playing tric-trac; at night he dreamed of ancient Athens and Cesare Borgia. It would be pompous for a weekend gardener with 22 acres to speak of his woodlot, but the trees do need culling from time to time.

The oldest trees on my land are three big maples, in a cleft watered by the seasonal stream. They grew to fullness because there was no other use to which that land could be put. When I bought the property, one had toppled down long ago, its trunk barkless, shattered, rotting. Its fellows each had a circumference of 20 feet. One has since lost a significant branch, almost a half of itself. But every spring its remainder and its companion still put out leaves so high they cannot be identified with the naked eye.

The big maples are too far back from the house and the yard to require attention. It is the closer-in, not-so-old-growth trees that need work. Age takes its toll, even if you haven't lived a couple of centuries. I have an oak, which came up in a double trunk; one of those trunks has a blackened, hollowed-out base. It could come down any day, wreaking havoc on the carport. It is time, as Al Gore said, for him to go.

A second moribund tree, right out my kitchen window, is a more delicate prob-

lem. There is a big hole in its trunk about five feet up. Birds use it as a rest stop and a snack bar; there must be bugs in there, for I have seen the pileated woodpecker, normally the shyest of creatures, perch at the opening in a trance of destruction as he drills away. The shell of the tree still carries a little life up to its top, but its time cannot be long. It would likely fall right on the house, and while it is not stout enough to do structural damage, it would ding the shingles. Some compromise between security and bird-watching must be found.

Other trees fall victim to the weather. Much of my property is not ideal for woods. The soil is both rocky and wet. Roots get a grip, but maybe not the best, and a downpour or a sudden heavy thaw can soften things up. We have had two tropical storms in the last few years, which destroyed state roads and swept away houses. One of the storms uprooted an elm alongside my driveway. Its crown grasped the crowns of its neighbors, who keep it suspended in mid fall, but they all lean at crazy angles like tree-drunks. On the other side of the driveway stood a double-trunked ash. One half of him came down, and was sawed and moved a year ago. But his other half, while healthy, has lost half of his root structure—try standing on one foot for the rest of your life; if he goes he will smash my front



gate. A storm also touched one of my sugar maples. He stands at the edge of the yard; the tink-tink of the first sap dropping into an empty pail in February is the promise of resurrection. One of his upper limbs snapped off a year or two ago. This damage is the least serious any of my trees has suffered—the rest of him is quite healthy—but the most undignified. The limb keeled over without making a clean split; the tree looks like a malingering yard worker leaning on a rake. The dripping sap this year seemed to call for attention: *think? think?*

The local paper is filled with ads for people who will come and take down your trees. Their prices are high—city dwellers are all Bloombergs—and their credentials are self-reported. For this kind of work you need someone who knows what he is doing and who carries his own insurance, but who won't come in and briskly clear-cut your place. I believe I have struck the balance. The young man who came to mark the victims—patients?—was well recommended. He charges a flat daily fee for him and his crew. He trims from the tops down, and told me proudly he was a recognized tree climber. We talked about the tree with the bird hole, and decided to leave a tall stump: bugs for decades.

When a tree falls, its roots peel back the skin of the world. A patch of soil lifts up into the air, mixed with stones, like chocolate chips. Depending on how wet the ground is, the holes may become vernal pools. Looking at the scar feels intrusive, almost unseemly. You are like a nomad bumbling among the ruins of superior beings. I met a traveler from an antique land who said, "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone stand in the desert."

Trees that you see week after week are like buildings in your neighborhood. You may not pay them any particular attention, but when they go or change you notice. When I moved to the city, I was

two blocks from Lüchow's, an old German restaurant, as phony as an operetta and as delightful. Every day I saw in the distance the World Trade towers. Third Avenue was lined with short, brick buildings, hanging on as bars from the days of the El. One of the last ones left houses a palm reader; it is girdled in scaffolding.

When the young man and his crew have done their work I will have firewood for a couple of winters. The elm, the oak, and the maple will have to dry out for a year, but ash can be burned right away. Ash to ashes.

NR

Bigots by Birth

If you're like me—a hominid American with external gonads and a melanin ratio that gives your epidermis a pinkish hue—then I've got some bad news for you: You're wrong about nearly everything and almost certainly a bigot.

Don't worry, white guys, things are still pretty good for you. You were born into the greatest empire the world has ever known at roughly the height of her power, and despite a recession here and a war there, you are likely to do quite well in it—at least compared with every other demographic group in history.

Even though you didn't ask for it, even though you can't dexterously wield it, and even though you may never even achieve conscious awareness of it, “white privilege” is, at least as a statistical phenomenon, a real thing. But have you noticed that the terms “white supremacy” and “white supremacists” are being brandished a little more wantonly these days, by both “we put the ‘id’ in ‘ideology’” rags like *Salon* and more “respectable” center-left publications like *The New Republic* and *The Atlantic*? And in reference not just to the violent, ignorant fantasies of dime-store Nazis in Idaho, but also to seemingly innocent public debates that only tangentially about issues of race?

Perhaps you've read the masterpiece of the genre, from the talented writer Ta-Nehisi Coates, who responded to media critic Dylan Byers's dissent from Coates's claim that MSNBC's Melissa Harris-Perry was “America's most foremost public intellectual” thus:

Here is the machinery of racism—the privilege of being oblivious to questions, of never having to grapple with the everywhere; the right of false naming; the right to claim that the lakes, trees, and mountains of our world do not exist; the right to insult our intelligence with your ignorance. The machinery of racism requires no bigotry from Dylan Byers. It merely requires that Dylan Byers sit still.

Hear that, white dudes? Your racism—a fortiori, your *white supremacy*—depends, according to an authoritative voice of right-thinking progressivism, on your *merely existing*. Fifty years ago the term “white supremacist” was reserved for bloody-minded sociopaths who tortured black boys and strung them up from nooses for holding eye contact with white debutantes. Today, the term is deployed against reconstructed celebrators of Martin Luther King Jr. Day who hold different opinions about part-time political scientists.

Coates, who, in a highly public contretemps also straddled the line of calling longtime Democratic apologist Jon Chait a white supremacist for holding views on race that are essentially the Democratic consensus, is spearheading the campaign to normalize the idea of white supremacy as a genetic condition. But he is far from alone.

Mr. Foster is a political consultant and a former news editor of NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE.

It could be that this is part of what Jonah Goldberg calls a social “auto-immune disease,” in which a society freed from the worst forms of institutionalized racism seizes on minor irritations as if by allergic reaction. But the diagnosis shouldn't make you white guys feel any better about the prognosis. Because the deregulation of “white supremacy” talk isn't just about giving frustrated minorities a vocabulary for working through their angst—like the “brown” *Salon* blogger who used not one but two columns to heap hate upon white women for “appropriating” belly dancing. It's about delegitimizing entire lines of thought by rendering the concept of white supremacy so vague and amorphous that any dissent can be construed as falling under it.

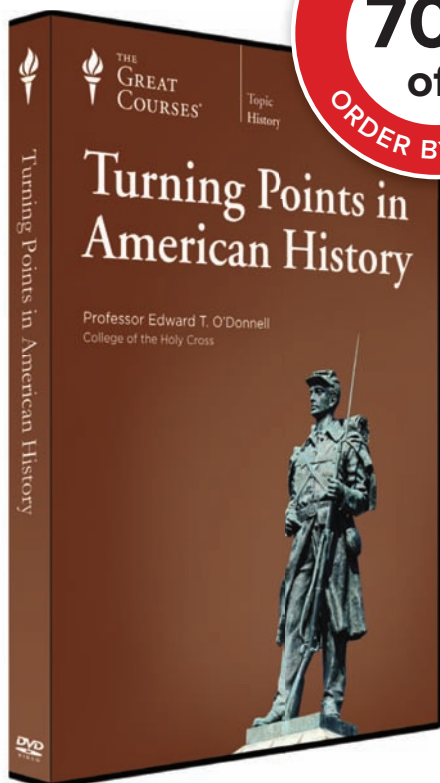
And so in the case of Cliven Bundy, the semi-sympathetic coot waging a standoff with the feds over where his steers chew their cud, your choice is clear: Either assent, chapter and verse, to the current administrative policies of the Bureau of Land Management, or count yourselves among the benighted yokels of yore who considered African bondage a gift of mercy.

And on the Supreme Court's recent decision to uphold a Michigan referendum banning affirmative action in college admissions, you are not safe with the views of the Court's plurality, who have the strange idea that that Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment requires equal protection. Nor does believing that the country's history of anti-black discrimination makes “race sensitive” admission policies merely *permissible* save you. Because the effect of Justice Sonia Sotomayor's dissent—widely praised on the left—is that affirmative action is *mandatory* in states like Michigan. Outlawing racial discrimination amounts to racial discrimination, and if you disagree, you'd better check your privilege.

Perhaps the most alienating aspect of this line of reasoning, to my fellow white guys, is that it indulges in the very racial essentialism and stereotyping it elsewhere decries. That in naming us as collaborators in white supremacy it denies us our agency and our individuality.

Yes, your unique lived experience is probably not reducible to broad demographic facts about your similarly hued cohort. And yes, it's probably true that your connection to slave-drivers and Jim Crow administrators the world over is no less mediated than gurgling Prince George Windsor's is to William the Conqueror. And sure, your alleged enjoyment of “white privilege” doesn't take into account the fact that you might be an orphan extruded from the social-services grinder, or an Appalachian from a methtown doomed to slinging chicken fingers for subsistence, or a community-college striver trying to put an associate degree to work in an era of stagnant wages and credential inflation, or a three-limbed veteran of Fallujah who can't sleep nights when the room gets too quiet, or any old member of Club Caucasian whom the Fates have squared up in their crosshairs and pelted with loss and calamity.

To the peddlers of ersatz “white supremacy,” your actual, real life is so much noise in the aggregation of white privilege. And I can't help but notice that you keep sitting still. **NR**



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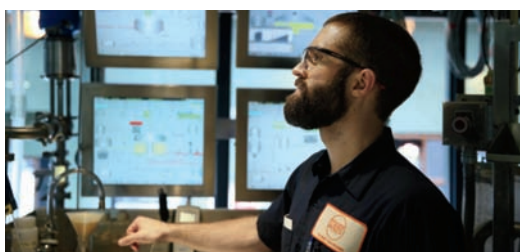
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