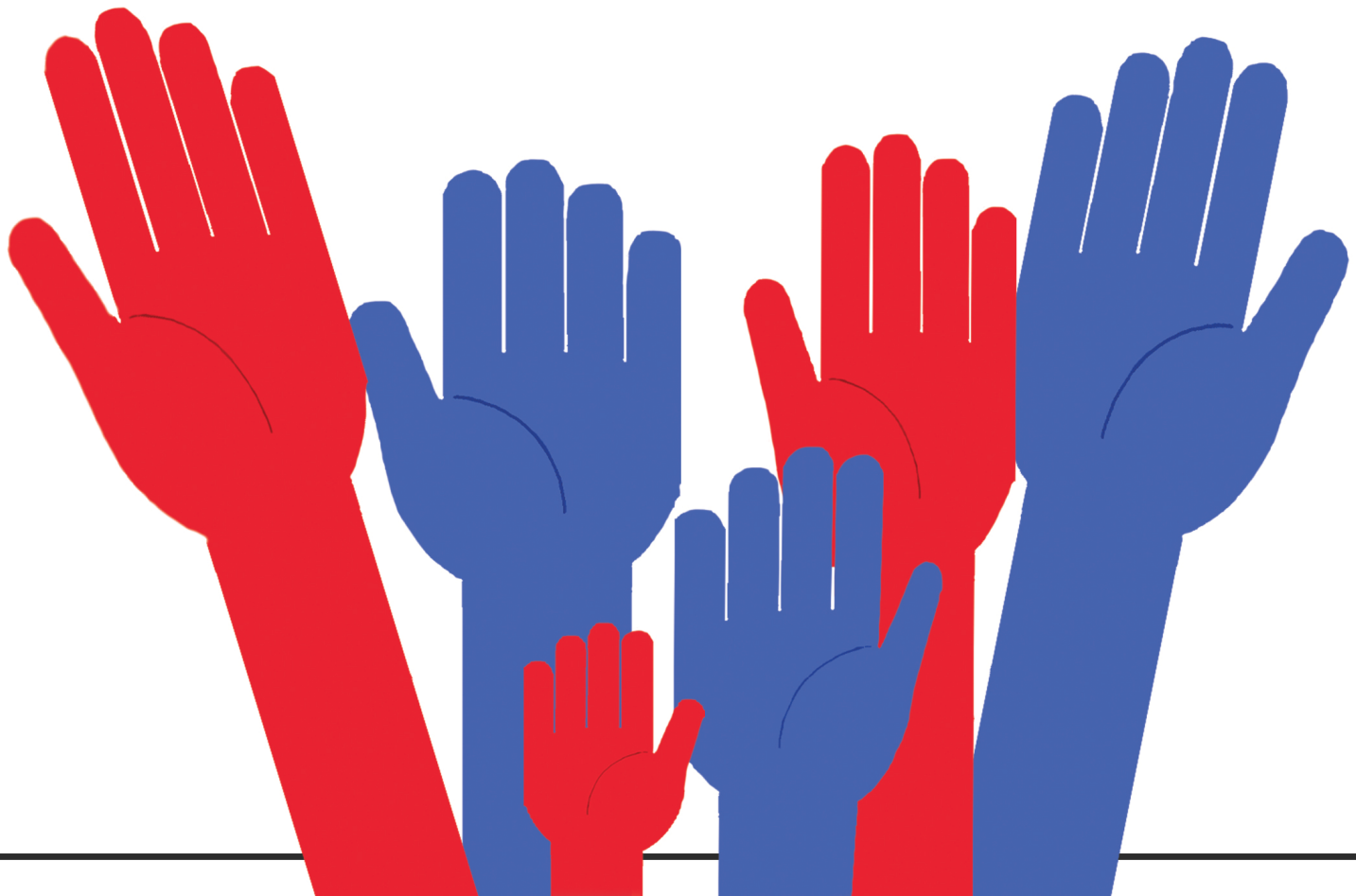
A NATIONAL REVIEW EXCLUSIVE

All In!

The 2020 Election Scorecard

Volume One



A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

It is the happy custom of *National Review* to publish, from time to time, collections of the works of our great writers, from Buckley in 1955 to—go ahead, insert the name you prefer—in 2019. This year offers an obvious subject for collection: The Democratic presidential campaign having started early, and its aspirants plentiful, we have decided to gather and publish throughout the year healthy samplings of our pieces—current and some from the magazine's plentiful archives—that will provide welcome commentary about the field, and about the individual candidates.

This Volume One is not a "best of," nor need it be, because there is so much exceptional content to be had, and shared. Superlative qualifiers are of little guidance.

We are confident that whoever settles down with this book will find each and every piece wise and informative. And enjoyable: *National Review*'s writers are, and have always been, pros with prose. So: Enjoy!

—National Review Staff
April, 2019

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APPETIZER:

Apologies to the Brothers Ringling

March 25, 2019

The 2020 Democratic Field Is a Clown-Car Show

By Jim Geraghty

If you're having trouble keeping track of all the Democratic presidential candidates, it's understandable. To bring you up to speed, so far there's New Jersey senator Cory Booker, South Bend mayor Pete Buttigieg, former housing-and-urban-development secretary Julián Castro, Maryland representative John Delaney, Hawaii representative Tulsi Gabbard, New York senator Kirsten Gillibrand, California senator Kamala Harris, Washington governor Jay Inslee, Minnesota senator Amy Klobuchar, Vermont senator Bernie Sanders, and Massachusetts senator Elizabeth Warren. As of this writing, reports indicate former Colorado governor John Hickenlooper is in the running too.

We're still waiting on a decision from former vice president Joe Biden, Ohio senator Sherrod Brown, Montana governor Steve Bullock, New York City mayor Bill de Blasio, former Virginia governor Terry McAuliffe, Massachusetts representative Seth Moulton, former Texas representative Beto O'Rourke, Ohio representative Tim Ryan, and California representative Eric Swalwell.

There's also Governor Eugene Gatling of Connecticut, Maryland senator David Palmer, Kansas senator Robert Kelly, Virginia congressman Nicholas Brody, Springfield mayor "Diamond Joe" Quimby—wait, those figures are fictional. But one could be forgiven for nodding along to this ever-expanding list of names that sound vaguely familiar from the realm of politics of somewhere else in America.

The Democratic 2020 field is likely to have even more candidates than the Republican one in 2016, and even for political junkies some of these figures are pretty obscure.

A mega-field means that the candidates' debuts in the spotlight are shorter and they have a smaller window in which to define themselves to a Democratic electorate—and in many cases, a national media—that knows little to nothing about them. For example, Gillibrand announced her campaign back on January 15; she's been running for nearly two months. She's been to Iowa twice; the only thing that generated headlines outside the state was a stop in an Iowa City restaurant, where Gillibrand's remarks to supporters were interrupted by a woman trying to squeeze past the senator, declaring, "I'm just going to get some ranch" salad dressing.

Gillibrand keeps insisting she's "running unabashedly as a mom," as if parenthood were a unique trait in presidential candidates or her primary qualification. Her family relations are of note in more specific ways; her maternal grandmother effectively ran the Albany machine, and her father was a powerful lobbyist. She's gotten a little bit of grief for having been, during Bush's second term, a centrist Democratic House member with outspoken, Trump-esque positions on illegal immigration and guns, positions she changed nearly overnight when appointed to take

Hillary Clinton's Senate seat. (She changed her view on gay marriage because the governor who selected her, David Paterson, told her it was necessary for the appointment.)

Presidential candidates used to court voters; now the process is closer to speed dating: meeting plenty of potential suitors for several minutes apiece, then selecting one based almost entirely on first impressions. (Come to think of it, that sounds like a lot of primary debates.)

This instant-definition process can take some surprising turns. Klobuchar is in her third term as a little-noticed senator; she's mostly known for being "Minnesota nice" while giving the standard Democratic talking points on the Sunday shows. But now that she's a presidential candidate, former staffers are talking to the *New York Times* and revealing the woman behind the image, describing a psychotic boss who throws binders in rage, makes underlings attend to personal tasks such as washing her dishes, and once asked an aide to clean her comb after she'd used it as a salad fork. Employees in the office of the senator who supported legislation requiring private employers to provide paid sick days and paid family and medical leave "were effectively required, once they returned" after the birth of a child, "to remain with the office for three times as many weeks as they had been gone." Those who did not were required to pay back their salary from the days spent out of the office.

Cory Booker, who's been touted as a Democratic rising star since his first bid for mayor of Newark in 2002, is now the field's big, lovable softie. At a time when many Democrats' attitudes are Conan-esque—they want to crush President Trump, to see his supporters driven before them, and to hear the lamentations of their women—Booker is talking about "universal love" and saying things like, "You definitely don't get [to a better America] by fighting each other, beating people down." We'll see whether Democrats find that approach inspiring or hopelessly naïve.

As the modern Democratic party is obsessed with identity politics, its 2020 field is likely to have the precise diversity of a Benetton ad. Harris's heritage is Jamaican and Indian, Castro's parents are of Mexican descent, Gabbard's father is of Samoan heritage, Buttigieg is gay, Warren is Native Americ—okay, we'll end with Buttigieg.

Probably the most intriguing figure still on the sidelines as of this writing is O'Rourke. He spent much of 2018 covered by the national media as a sort of Lone Star Jesus, a "Vanilla Obama" who could slay the dragon of Ted Cruz and lead the Democrats to wins in Texas and much of the rest of Red America. He fell short but turned in the best performance by a Democrat running statewide in a generation, leaving many national Democrats virtually begging him to run for president. But after the election, he went on an odd, Kerouac-esque journey through the American West and published an easily parodied diary online. Since then O'Rourke has hemmed and hawed about the decision on Oprah's couch and chosen not to announce at a giant counter-rally when President Trump spoke in El Paso.

Not all of the advantages O'Rourke enjoyed in 2018 are guaranteed in a 2020 bid. National Democrats donated that $80 million to him out of a loathing for Cruz as much as for a love for him. National publications that ran florid prose admiring his sweat probably won't be as uniquely transfixed this time around, and his Democratic-primary rivals will punch back hard. (Perhaps unfairly, given that O'Rourke was running in Texas, they will ask: If he couldn't win against Cruz

in a good Democratic year, with more money than any other Senate candidate ever and glowing national media coverage, when exactly *can* O'Rourke win?) Throw in the 2003 video of him playing guitar onstage in a onesie and a sheep mask, the much more recent videos of him skateboarding in the Whataburger parking lot, the meager record of legislative accomplishments, the oddly under-prosecuted serious DUI at age 26—it wouldn't take that much effort to paint the baby-faced O'Rourke as an overgrown teenager. Republicans can accurately joke that he's the kind of slacker ne'er-do-well that Kamala Harris would have put away for a long time in her days as a district attorney.

A handful of the figures still on the sidelines have been around politics long enough that their reputations are carved in granite. No one's going to believe a narrative that Joe Biden is now a careful speaker. But an established reputation may prove to be an advantage when there's so little time and bandwidth to define your persona.

Why do presidential candidates now come in litters? The cost–benefit analysis has changed over the past few cycles. Running unsuccessfully now offers too much upside, not enough downside. The first and most traditional argument against longshot bids—"You'll never win!"—is now refuted by Trump's unlikely victory. (These candidates forget that Trump entered the primary with 99.2 percent name recognition, according to a survey commissioned by GOP consultant Liz Mair.)

A lot of today's lesser presidential campaigns amount to book tours on a larger scale, complete with a (usually sappy and ghostwritten) autobiography and campaign manifesto. The candidate changes from just another member of Congress to a frequent television guest; he's invited to endless interviews, forums, roundtables, and debates; he writes guest op-eds. News organizations are ravenous for clicks and content, and someone, somewhere, will always want to interview the candidate. It's a sweet deal if you can bear cold weather in Iowa and New Hampshire: Your name is on posters, complete strangers want your autograph and a photo with you, you're always speaking before audiences that agree with you, every joke and jab at the opposition party generates laughter and applause. For about a year, you're constantly told that you matter, and all of this is so much more fun than actual governing. There are plenty of political figures for whom "finished sixth in the Iowa caucuses" will rank as a top achievement.

The all-too-easy metaphor for this year's Democratic party is the clown car from which contortionists seem to emerge endlessly, hoping to thrill the people watching. Much like the contortionist-clowns, the Democratic candidates are unique but nearly indistinguishable—they all loathe Trump; at least rhetorically support "the Green New Deal," some variation of "Medicare-for-all," and free college education; and denounce proposals for physical border barriers as architectural xenophobia. But maybe the more modern comparison is Netflix—there's no shortage of options, but after a while they all start to look the same.

MORE APPETIZERS:

Hey! With This Many Democrats Running, It Could Just Happen That . . .

April 11, 2019

What If No Democratic Presidential Candidate Gets Enough Delegates?

By Jim Geraghty

Over at Larry Sabato's "Crystal Ball" site, Kyle Kondik observes that considering the size of the field and the Democratic party's way of allocating delegates—no winner-take-all states, just a 15 percent threshold to win any delegates—the primary season could end with no candidate winning the necessary number of delegates and "the Democratic National Convention could hypothetically go to a second ballot."

(Those who would like to see a party convention be newsworthy again will be cheering for this scenario.)

There's a good chance that the 15 percent rule is going to cause Democrats headaches. Somebody at some point is going to win 13 or 14 percent of the vote a state primary and not get any delegates, and that candidate and their supporters are likely to be furious. You will probably hear a lot of cries of "rigged!" and claims that the process is unfair—or that it even represents "voter suppression" of some kind. (This is what a lot of Democrats do when they lose an election. They appear to believe in only two possible outcomes: they win or somebody else must have cheated.)

Imagine a scenario where Joe Biden, Bernie Sanders, Kamala Harris, Beto O'Rourke, Pete Buttigieg, Elizabeth Warren, and Cory Booker all get roughly the same share of the vote in a state primary. That sort of split would give everyone . . . 14.2 percent of the vote. Who gets the delegates then? Or what if one candidate gets, say, 20 percent of the vote and everyone else is under 15 percent? Does the leading candidate get 100 percent of the delegates? Unless there's a clear frontrunner, a lot of candidates will scream that the process is unfair and rigged against them.

And Democrats shouldn't count on low funds forcing some of the long-shot candidates to step off the stage. A candidate who just wants to hang around and get invited to debates and do television interviews can hang around for a long time, even without much money. In 2016, Jim Gilmore raised $824,000 in the entire cycle and stayed in the race until after the New Hampshire primary. John Kasich's campaign raised $18 million, won 161 out of a possible 2,472 delegates, and he stayed in the race until May.

When do the Democrats start thinking about unity tickets?

March 29, 2019

The 2020 Democratic Presidential Party Will Be a Demolition Derby of Identity Politics

By Jim Geraghty

Over at *Slate*, Christina Cauterucci writes a column with the headline, "Is Pete Buttigieg Just Another White Male Candidate, or Does His Gayness Count as Diversity?

Identity politics, as demonstrated by the need to shoehorn Buttigieg into one of those two boxes, hooks people in by catering to two psychological temptations. The first is laziness. Up until a little while ago, I didn't know much about Pete Buttigieg. To put together the 'Twenty Things' piece, I had to go out and buy and read his autobiography, read the profile pieces of him and interviews and coverage of his decisions as mayor, watch his television appearances, and so on. Getting to know a political figure, particularly a relatively new one, takes time and effort. When you digest it all, you may come up with a complicated or conflicting impression—on the plus side, Buttigeig's bright, chose to serve his country in uniform, and after he had built a resume that could have gotten him a job just about anywhere, he set out to help revive his hometown. On the negative side, he's wildly ambitious even by the standards of politicians, it's fair to wonder just how much he's actually improved life in his hometown, and he's considerably more liberal in his stances than most coverage would suggest.

But if you embrace identity politics, you can draw a quick conclusion about a candidate just by looking at him or learning the name of his spouse. You can dismiss him as "a run-of-the-mill white-male candidate," or you can be cheered by his status as a gay man, even if you lament Buttigieg's "assimilationist perspective" and that he's "less exciting as the supposed gay trailblazer some on the left desperately want him to be," as the *Slate* piece does.

Who cares about what Buttigeig actually thinks about policy—like his belief that Mike Bloomberg's large-soda-ban "came from this pragmatist, business-oriented mayor who was following the facts and realized there is a pretty high social cost to obesity"—when you can instantly declare he's either a trailblazer or "not enough of a trailblazer"?

The other psychological temptation that identity politics caters to is grievance. Cauterucci notes that writer Jill Filipovic was irritated that a correspondent gushed about Buttigieg's intelligence but didn't do the same for Elizabeth Warren or Cory Booker. Mark Harris fumed that Buttigieg was being characterized as a "typical white guy the media always falls for," which didn't recognize him being gay.

Gripe, gripe, gripe. Complain, complain, complain. Everybody's on high alert for anything that could be construed as a snub or some subtle indicator of less respect than someone else. Everybody's on a hair trigger to call someone out for how their compliment to one person

demonstrated their unconscious bias against another person. Every off-the-cuff statement suddenly becomes a symbol of historical injustice. Filipovic didn't merely say, "Hey, Warren is smart too"; she said, "We recognize and applaud brilliance and intelligence in white men, and are less likely to identify it in women and people of color." With merely a tweet calling Buttigieg smart, some tax-policy wonk had allegedly perpetuated systemic sexism and racism.

Who in their right mind wants to have a conversation in a hypersensitive and accusatory environment like this? And if you can't have a conversation, how do you have a debate?

How in the world do you manage a presidential primary—where the whole point is for a candidate to draw distinctions with the rest of the field, to emphasize that whatever good qualities their rivals may have, he is the best choice—in an environment where every statement must be scanned with a mass spectrometer to detect any residual trace of racism, sexism, homophobia, ageism, unconscious bias, microaggression, or other cause for offense?

The irony is that in a party obsessed with identity politics, identity-based criticism is likely to be the most effective. Sure, the first debate will be mostly polite. But at some point, push is going to come to shove, and candidates will feel the need to draw distinctions and attack the frontrunners. Warren's claim to Native American heritage and past status as a "woman of color" at Harvard will be too tempting a target to resist. (*Cultural appropriation*!) A candidate who wanted to eat away at Harris's support might raise the nepotism charge and her early career help from Willie Brown. (*Sexism*!) Someone will reasonably ask whether Democrats are comfortable with Bernie Sanders being 79 years old on Inauguration Day 2021. (*Ageism*!) Beto O'Rourke is already trying to navigate these waters, and he's already faced the criticism that his road trip "drips with white male privilege."

And in an environment like this, how long until Joe Biden's mouth gets him in trouble? One of Stacey Abrams's advisors is already calling Biden "exploitative" and "entitled" because he didn't back her in the 2018 primary.

(More than a few have noticed that despite all the focus on identity politics, the three leading candidates in the early polling are Biden, Sanders, and in some polls, O'Rourke, and they're collectively getting about 60 percent of the vote. The arguments of identity politics may be more potent in the Democratic party's chattering class and media circles than with primary voters as a whole. Or maybe Biden and Sanders are just well ahead because they're the best-known right now.)

You think the 2016 Democratic primary fight between the Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders got rough? The 2020 primary is going to look like Mad Max's "Fury Road." The great irony is that this long process may eventually undermine the power of identity politics, as the surviving Democratic nominee will probably have been accused of racism, sexism, etcetera in the process of winning the primary.

February 7, 2019

A Syllabus of Errors: The Emerging Democratic Agenda for 2020

By Kevin D. Williamson

The age of Trump is supposedly an age of Republican radicalism, a phenomenon about which we hear daily—indeed, hourly, if we endure cable-news commentary and talk radio.

But that Republican radicalism is almost nowhere to be found in the Republican policy agenda. President Donald Trump is a wild man on Twitter; in the Oval Office, pen in hand, he's Jeb Bush. His signature domestic-policy achievement is a mostly conventional Republican tax cut that actually conflicted with much of what he had promised during the campaign, when he talked about jacking up taxes on investors and multinational business concerns. One of the least appreciated aspects of Trump's presidency (so far) is that the president has been quietly—but thoroughly—dominated by the Republican leadership in Congress, even as he has loudly—but fruitlessly—proclaimed himself the boss. When it comes to the items on Trump's agenda that conflict either in substance or in priority with the congressional-GOP agenda—new immigration restrictions, border wall, $1 trillion infrastructure program, neo-mercantilist trade policy—Senator Mitch McConnell & Co. simply decline to take up the president's to-do list. As he learns about the political contours of his recently adopted party and the conservative movement that has helped to organize it, President Trump becomes a more conventional Republican day by day—on policy.

The radicalism of Donald Trump's Republican party is rhetorical—the party's language is unsparing and confrontational, its stance unyielding, its understanding of itself in relation to the major American institutions increasingly countercultural. But even though it is wed to an utterly conventional GOP political playbook, that rhetorical radicalism has provided the Democrats with what they take to be a plenary indulgence of reciprocal radicalism—not only in rhetoric but in substance.

This current of Democratic radicalism predates Trump and Trumpism—it was evident in the antiwar movement of the Bush years and the Occupy Wall Street movement that emerged toward the end of that administration. (Senator Elizabeth Warren, who is among the contenders for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination, boasts that she laid the intellectual foundations for Occupy.) Both the protests against the Iraq War and the slow-motion riot that began in Zuccotti Park and never quite subsided saw ordinary and purportedly responsible Democrats, including both intellectuals and officeholders, making common cause with far-left radicals of many different stripes: Louis Farrakhan–style anti-Semites, Soviet nostalgists marching around Lower Manhattan in East German military uniforms. Anarchists such as David Graeber came into fashion (and have not gone out) along with old-fashioned Marxists such as Slavoj Zizek, the Slovenian psychoanalytic philosopher and apologist for political violence. Outside the realm of academics,

imitators such as intellectual *manquée* Elizabeth Bruenig, now of the *Washington Post*, openly took up the banner of socialism. "Tankies" began to gleefully make the case for Josef Stalin's liberal use of artillery and genocidal famine as instruments of political persuasion. The usual campus Maoists and mau-mauists began making their way off the quad and into the centers of Democratic power, carried there in no small part by the 2016 Democratic primary campaign of Senator Bernie Sanders, the Brooklyn socialist who represents Vermont in the Senate.

Trump's victory helped to supercharge that emboldened radicalism, partly because of who he is and how he comports himself but chiefly because he was supposed to lose and didn't.

Hence the emerging 2020 Democratic agenda as articulated by those seeking the party's presidential nomination, an agenda that owes a good deal more to Hugo Chávez than to Jack Kennedy—or even to Hillary Rodham Clinton, whose failure as a candidate liberated progressive activists from the burden of pretending not to detest her relatively business-friendly approach and the Wall Street Democrats behind it.

As of this writing, that 2020 agenda has two major pieces: One is adopting a Soviet model of health care—no, not a British model; the British haven't abolished private insurance, as Senator Kamala Harris proposes to do—and the other is wealth confiscation. Republicans, unfortunately, already are falling into the error of presenting as the principal argument against this radicalism that the latter will prove insufficient to pay for the former.

The budget math is not the most important argument, but the numbers are worth considering: The "Medicare for all" national-monopoly model of health care proposed by Senators Sanders, Harris, Warren, Gillibrand, and others is projected to cost about $3.5 *trillion* a year—and that is a relatively friendly estimate. That figure exceeds all federal tax revenue—*all of it*—for 2018. That health-care entitlement alone would cost more than Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and defense combined, and would represent a near-doubling of federal expenditures. It would require more than doubling total federal taxes just to keep the deficit where it is, which is right around the $1 trillion mark, an unsustainable level that is in and of itself a major policy problem.

The defects of the monopoly model of health care already are evident in all of the places where such monopolies have been created, not only in distant backwaters but in economically advanced countries such as the United Kingdom and Canada, where delays, poor quality of care, and corruption are ongoing problems that are getting worse. In Canada, the average delay between referral to a specialist and treatment has gone from about six weeks in the 1990s to nearly three months today. Patients crippled by joint failures can wait nearly a year for a knee replacement. In November, a House of Lords committee warned the British government that the figures produced by the National Health Service do not accurately reflect the prevalence of bribery and fraud in that system. Scottish hospitals are in crisis over deadly infections caused by unsanitary conditions, including deaths of children from diseases transmitted in the hospital by pigeon droppings. It is worth keeping in mind when evaluating these horror stories that both Canadian and British public-sector institutions reliably outperform their American counterparts when it comes to effectiveness,

transparency, and honesty. The NHS is not great. The NHS as run by something like Cory Booker's former mayoral administration in Newark would be worse.

There are many ways to get to universality in health-care coverage, and it should be emphasized that very few countries actually have a single, unitary, national-monopoly system of the kind Democrats are envisioning. Neither liberal Western European countries such as Germany nor the Northern European welfare states so admired by American progressives typically rely on such systems. Far from being a Scandinavian answer to the NHS, Sweden has a broadly decentralized system in which administration and responsibility lie with the county governments or, in some cases, with municipalities. This helps to create accountability; for example, if a Swedish patient does not receive timely care from a local provider ("timely" of course being elastic; in the Swedish context, it generally means three months, part of what health-care scholar Arne Björnberg describes as the system's "seemingly never-ending story of access/waiting time problems"), then the county government is obliged to send him elsewhere for care—and to pay for his care and his travel both. That kind of accountability is hard to provide in a national system with 325 million patients, as indeed the U.S. experience with both Medicare and Medicaid has made abundantly clear. The Swiss system, which the architects of the Affordable Care Act attempted partly to replicate, relies exclusively on private insurance, and it emphasizes cross-jurisdictional competition, consumer choice, and individual responsibility. There is no single-payer system in Germany or France. Germany, in fact, is rated by the Euro Health Index as having the most consumer-driven system in Europe.

If the goal is to increase Americans' access to high-quality health care and to minimize the financial risk and uncertainty associated with the American system—both worthy goals—then instituting a political monopoly and abolishing private insurance is not the most obvious plan of action. If the goal is to prove that you are more radical than Joe Biden—and more anti-Trump than Starbucks founder Howard Schultz—then monopolies and authoritarianism are just the thing.

Much the same thing applies to Democratic radicalism on taxes: The politics of vendetta produce results at odds with the goal of raising revenue.

Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who is—angels and ministers of grace defend us!—too young to run for president this time around, has hit upon the idea of raising tax rates to 70 percent on very high-income households: those earning $10 million and up.

But even assuming (unlikely as it is) no change in the economic behavior of high-earning Americans in response to such radically higher taxes, the Ocasio-Cortez proposal and others like it would raise, even according to friendly projections, only a trivial amount of money relative to the cost of their policy proposals. But as Vanessa Williamson (no relation) of the Brookings Institution makes clear, revenue is not the point. Revenge is. "The revenue question is the wrong question," she writes:

> Not because talking about revenue plays into a Republican strategy of deeply hypocritical deficit fear mongering—though it does. Not because extracting money from rich people is easy; there are serious technical questions about how to implement taxes on the very wealthy. The problem with using revenue to justify

> progressive taxation is that over time, an effective progressive tax system should actually raise *less and less money*.
>
> Progressive taxation should work as a corrective tax, like tobacco taxes or a carbon tax. . . . Taxes on the wealthy discourage a different societal ill: exploitative capitalism. Progressive tax policy is a powerful corrective to economic inequality and wealth concentration.

Which is to say: The current progressive conception of justice holds that making the wealthy less wealthy is morally necessary and worthy even if doing so does nothing at all to make the poor more wealthy or to provide the government with additional revenue with which to offer services to those in need. Wealth itself is to be understood as a sinful vice, like smoking, to be punished and if possible reduced through vengeful taxation.

Understood from that point of view, Senator Sanders's proposed 77 percent tax on the estates of wealthy Americans and Senator Warren's proposal to impose a 2 percent net-worth tax on similar households make more sense: Senator Sanders's proposal would raise less than 1 percent of what he wants to spend on a single new health-care entitlement, but it would inconvenience a few billionaires and rob them of the opportunity to take their families from shirtsleeves to shirtsleeves at some Monaco baccarat table.

It is notable that Senator Harris is also campaigning for a very large tax cut: nearly $3 trillion in savings for Americans earning incomes into the six figures but short of Mark Zuckerberg money. Her plan would add mightily to the deficit but, unlike most of what the Democrats are talking about, it has a good chance of making its way through a partly or wholly Republican-controlled Congress without too many bumps and scratches. Naked malice and venom may get you through the primary, but a middle-class tax cut is the way to a second term.

The Democrats are setting themselves up for disappointment in 2020. They believe that the answer to a glowering and polarizing figure such as Donald Trump is an equally divisive figure—and agenda—of their own. Howard Schultz already knows that he cannot run in his own party, even though Senator Sanders—who is not a member of the Democratic party—can. Former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg, the most experienced and reasonable of the likely Democratic contenders—and the one with by far the best actual record in office—already is being denounced as just another rich old white man who is a part of the problem more than of the solution. The proverb holds that revenge is a dish best served cold, but the Democrats are going into the primary season hot, hot, hot.

MAIN COURSES

So Many Demagogues From Which To Choose

August 16, 2018

Elizabeth Warren's Batty Plan to Nationalize . . . Everything

By Kevin D. Williamson

Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts has one-upped socialists Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez: She proposes to nationalize every major business in the United States of America. If successful, it would constitute the largest seizure of private property in human history.

Warren's proposal is dishonestly called the "Accountable Capitalism Act." *Accountable to whom?* you might ask. That's a reasonable question. The answer is—as it always is—accountable to politicians, who desire to put the assets and productivity of private businesses under political discipline for their own selfish ends. It is remarkable that people who are most keenly attuned to the self-interest of CEOs and shareholders and the ways in which that self-interest influences their decisions apparently believe that members of the House, senators, presidents, regulators, Cabinet secretaries, and agency chiefs somehow are liberated from self-interest when they take office through some kind of miracle of transcendence.

Under Senator Warren's proposal, no business with more than $1 billion in revenue would be permitted to legally operate without permission from the federal government. The federal government would then dictate to these businesses the composition of their boards, the details of internal corporate governance, compensation practices, personnel policies, and much more. Naturally, their political activities would be restricted, too. Senator Warren's proposal entails the wholesale expropriation of private enterprise in the United States, and nothing less. It is unconstitutional, unethical, immoral, irresponsible, and—not to put too fine a point on it—utterly bonkers.

It is also cynical. Senator Warren is many things: a crass opportunist, intellectually bankrupt, personally vapid, a peddler of witless self-help books, etc. But she is not *stupid*. She knows that this is a go-nowhere proposition, that she will be spared by the Republican legislative majority from the ignominy that would ensue from the wholehearted pursuit of this daft program. It is in reality only a means of staking out for purely strategic reasons the most radical corner for her 2020 run at the Democratic presidential nomination. The Democratic party in 2018, like the Republican primary electorate in 2016, is out for blood and desirous of confrontation. So Senator Warren is running this red flag up the flagpole to see who salutes.

To propose such a thing for sincere reasons would be ghastly stupidity. To propose this program for narrowly self-serving political reasons is the sort of thing that would end a political career in a sane and self-respecting state, which Massachusetts plainly is not and has not been for some time.

To those on the left who look at Senator Warren's proposal and think that giving the government a stronger whip hand over American businesses is just the ticket, I would like to present four questions: Who is the president of these United States? Who is the majority leader in the Senate? Who is the speaker of the House? How would you evaluate the composition of the Supreme Court, either as it stands or after President Donald Trump has the opportunity to nominate another justice or two? The power you give the federal government will be there during Republican administrations, too. Any future populist demagogue who finds his way into the White House will have access to the same power. No one should be trusted with that kind of power.

And nobody who *seeks* that kind of power should be trusted with any power at all.

It is worth keeping in mind that the fabulous goose was slaughtered not in spite of the golden eggs but *because of them*. Politicians are covetous. When the owners of Apple wish to hold on to their own after-tax earnings, they are denounced as *greedy*. (Apple's shareholders are corporately the largest taxpayer in the world.) When Elizabeth Warren wants to seize those earnings for her own use, what is that? It is covetousness, which is what you get when you have greed compounded with envy. Senator Warren, a former Sunday-school teacher, apparently has a keen appreciation for the vices that lurk in the human heart, and she intends to leverage them to her benefit.

Another thing about these kinds of proposals: They are, at heart, acts of cowardice. There are politicians who wish to provide benefits to certain constituents and who would like those benefits to be paid for by other parties who are politically disfavored. There is an easy way to do that: Tax *x* to subsidize *y*. The problem with doing that is embarrassment. Politicians such as Senator Warren lack the courage to go to the American electorate and say: "We wish to provide these benefits, and they will cost an extra $3 trillion a year, which we will pay for by doubling taxes." Why spend the money to subsidize, say, health insurance, when you can just pass rules that make businesses do the subsidizing for you? It's a way to spend money without putting the expenditures on a budget line. It treats the productive capacity of the United States as a herd of dairy cows to be milked by Senator Warren et al. at their convenience. And, of course, Senator Warren and her colleagues get to decide how the milk gets distributed, too.

One wonders why American businesses put up with it.

They do not have to. Not really.

It is a fairly easy thing for an established American business to move its corporate domicile to some other country, as with all those corporate inversions in the pharmaceutical industry that gave the Obama administration the willies a few years ago. It is also a fairly easy thing for a new business being founded by Americans to incorporate in some other country from the beginning. There is no insurmountable reason for, say, Microsoft or Altria (formerly Philip Morris) to be domiciled in the United States. Silicon Valley's competitive edge comes from people, and people are mobile.

Nearly half of the total sales of the S&P 500 businesses come from overseas customers. Many big U.S. manufacturers such as Caterpillar get more than half of their sales from abroad. Exxon, the target of a political jihad being conducted by Senator Warren's party, gets more than

half of its revenue from overseas sales. You can serve the growing Asian markets as easily from Singapore as from California or Virginia. Watching American cities scurry around to prostrate themselves before Jeff Bezos (pbuh) in the hopes of attracting the new Amazon campus has been amusing. Imagine Apple or Google doing that in a global search for a new home. Fanciful? Yes.

Fanciful today.

Businesses historically have chosen to locate in the United States for a number of reasons: It was long the world's largest market, and businesses had faith in American law and the American dollar. It's still a big market, and the dollar is still the world's favorite currency. But if American law or American lawmakers are going to treat profit-seeking enterprises as an Enemy of the People—Zurich is pretty nice. Lots of places are. There are a lot of big American businesses with targets painted on their backs, and those that do not already have a Plan B are doing their shareholders a disservice.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Hugo Chávez, Huey Long: The rogues' gallery of those who sought to fortify their political power by bullying businesses is long, and it is sickening. Senator Warren now nominates herself to that list, at least in her aspiration. It is not an honorable aspiration.

April 18, 2012

Elizabeth Warren's Wall Street Money Machine

By Kevin D. Williamson

Elizabeth Warren has called Massachusetts Senator Scott Brown the "poster boy for Goldman Sachs." Her aide Alethea Harney had this to say: "Unlike with Scott Brown, middle-class families won't have to wonder whether Elizabeth Warren will choose them over Wall Street." And why might Scott Brown, who does not have particularly deep ties to Wall Street, choose distant financiers over the voters in his backyard? The answer, Professor Warren says, is filthy lucre, i.e. campaign donations. "The Wall Street guys have been meeting aggressively to say, 'How many different ways can we fund Scott Brown to make sure Elizabeth Warren does not go to the United States Senate?'" she has charged. A Massachusetts Democratic spokesman, Kevin Franck, made a similar charge: "It's no surprise that Wall Street and the big banks continue to finance Scott Brown's campaign, because he continues to put their interests first, ahead of middle-class Massachusetts families."

Senator Brown shares with President Barack Obama the distinction of being a recipient of very generous campaign donations from Goldman Sachs, his third-largest contributor behind two Massachusetts mainstays: Boston-based Fidelity and Boston-based Liberty Mutual. If these donations make Senator Brown the "poster child for Goldman Sachs," then we must think of a comparable epithet for Professor Warren, whose campaign also takes in a great deal of money from Wall Street—or, in the interest of more precise metonymy, from the sewers beneath Wall Street. I am in general not much of an admirer of Wall Street bankers, but the bankers are scholars and gentlemen compared to Wall Street lawyers, who combine the rapacity and cleverness of the financier with the paid-by-the-hour-plus-a percentage complacency associated with the legal profession. With apologies to Matt Taibbi, Wall Street lawyers are the sort of people who give vampire squids a bad name.

If she wants to play the guilt-by-association game, Professor Warren should begin by quitting her $350,000-a-year job at Harvard, where she is the Leo Gottlieb Professor of Law. That chair was endowed in memory of Mr. Gottlieb by the law firm he founded, the high-powered Cleary Gottlieb, which is not primarily in the business of helping middle-class Americans secure their legal interests against the dreaded 1 Percent. Instead, these lawyers make their living in part by helping multinational banks that profited from the Bernie Madoff fraud avoid paying compensation to Madoff victims. Professor Warren, a critic of cozy ties between regulators and industry, surely will be fascinated to learn that in the interest of maximizing its expertise in the finer points of such securities law, the firm went so far as to hire the former general counsel of the Securities and Exchange Commission—a man who resigned from the SEC after being sued by Madoff victims over $1.5 million in Madoff money that ended up in his pockets and those of his

siblings. The SEC lawyer and his siblings later turned the money over to Madoff victims in a settlement.

In the interest of fairness, it should be noted that there are all sorts of reasons that Cleary Gottlieb might want to write a great big check to endow a chair at Harvard, a gift that will long outlast Professor Warren's tenure. But there are good-faith reasons that firms—even Goldman Sachs—make political donations, too. Imagine that Scott Brown held a lifelong fellowship endowed by the Koch brothers—can you begin to imagine the Klaxons of panic that fact would raise on the left?

Endowing a professorship is a very different thing from making a campaign donation, it is true. The relationship is in some ways more intimate: Election cycles come and go, but Cleary Gottlieb's profits funded the professorship that pays Elizabeth Warren's salary and has done so for years. Wall Street lawyer money doesn't just help pay for Professor Warren's campaign commercials—it puts food on her table and gas in her tank, maintains her multimillion-dollar home, and keeps her in an Ivy League sinecure on flexible enough terms that she can spend her day running for political office rather than, to mention one possibility, *teaching law*.

But Cleary Gottlieb's beneficence is not limited to Ivy League law schools. At least one lawyer in the firm has donated to the Warren campaign, and Cleary Gottlieb has an apparent interest in Massachusetts Democrats: It was a very generous benefactor of John Kerry's presidential campaign. Beyond that donation to the Warren campaign proper, the firm's relationship with Democrats is much deeper: Two of its attorneys by themselves have given more than $60,000 to the Democratic Senate Campaign Committee, which will of course help Professor Warren. One gave another $9,200 to the DSCC, another gave $10,000 to the DNC Services Corp. The firm donates to the abortion fanatics at Emily's List, which Catholic Massachusetts might note is Professor Warren's largest single contributor, and the firm has made very generous contributions to the campaigns of such notable Democrats as Barack Obama, Kirsten Gillibrand, Al Franken, Mark Warner, and others. (Republicans? I found two donations to Mitt Romney. Check out the data yourself, if you're so inclined.)

Other Warren financial benefactors include the Berkshire Group, a firm that recently found itself involved in some thorny litigation with investors alleging that it had "falsely bolstered the collateral of Philadelphia-based subprime lender ABFS by nearly 350 percent." (Berkshire has always maintained that it did not break the law in the case, and last July a judge agreed, though the ruling is the sort of thing that reminds one that there is a world of difference between "not guilty" and "innocent." For more on the ugly ABFS story, see this *Wall Street Journal* report.)

If you have an interest in the enormously profitable field of asbestos litigation, you might consult another of Warren's donors, a law firm with the *Mad Men*–worthy man Bergman Draper. Perhaps your thing isn't asbestos; if it's white-collar crime and escaping federal prosecutions for same, another Warren donor, Brown Rudnick, would be pleased to help you out, for a large fee.

The times being what they are, every business needs legal representation, even coal businesses seeking federal handouts, one of which has been wise enough to seek representation from Elizabeth Warren ally Mintz Levin. In fact, the list of Warren's top donors is practically a

roll call of lawyers up to their ears in the arcana of structured finance, mortgage-backed securities, and general Wall Street shenanigans. The first guys to securitize credit-card debt? Elizabeth Warren donors. Big banks back Brown, you say? What about the world's largest and most influential investment firm? Yes, BlackRock backs Professor Warren. Any time you have Moveon.org and Wall Street on the same side, you should hide your assets.

Practically all of the exotic structured-finance products you hear about exist as a direct response to regulation. That being the case, they are not the product of financial engineers only: They are the result of a collaborative effort between financial engineers and Wall Street lawyers. Professor Warren gets some financial support from the former and a hell of a lot from the latter. While I very much doubt that the ghost of Leo Gottlieb or the guys at Mintz Levin would be calling the shots behind the scenes were Professor Warren elected to the Senate, until she is willing to extend the same assumption of good faith to her opponent, she should be held to the standard she sets for him. In which case, we must conclude that the candidate of Occupy Wall Street is also the candidate of Wall Street—which, given the left-leaning, pro-Democrat, bet-hedging nature of the Manhattan-based financial world, is no surprise.

April 16, 2012

Occupy the Senate: Elizabeth Warren Meets the 99 Percent

By Kevin D. Williamson

Boston—Elizabeth Warren would be a catastrophe in the Senate, but she is hell on wheels when it comes to directing human traffic, which is no small thing at the St. Patrick's Day breakfast in Boston. She goes bulling her way through a crowd of faces the color of 2 percent milk, sicklied o'er with the pale cast of Southie Irishness, or rendered rosy by the effects of seriously draining down a full bar that opened at eight o'clock on a Sunday morning, plowing through like she's just graduated from a seminar in Advanced Executive Body Language, all exaggerated masculine gestures and "Yes! I am very seriously paying attention to you!" head bobs and vigorous "This is what Sincerity looks like . . . approximately!" power nods, complemented by "Move along, sir!" shoulder grips followed by quick and vigorous "Back the Hell Off" chest pats when some florid Southie denizen moves in for a hug—she is like Moses parting the kelly green sea. She is a populist in search of a people, and the wall-eyed gang shout-singing "Southie Is My Home Town" and chasing their eggs and rashers with Jameson on the rocks isn't it. St. Patrick's Day, as state senator Jack Hart ("Senator Hot," in the local pronunciation) reminds the crowd, is also celebrated in Boston as Evacuation Day, and Warren looks like she is in dire need of an emergency airlift back to Cambridge.

The breakfast is a political roast, which puts Warren at a disadvantage: As with cancer and feminism, there is nothing funny about Elizabeth Warren. Once she has traversed the

beshamrocked riff-raff and been seated on the dais, she fades away—hardly anybody takes notice of her. Whether this is because her fellow Democrats regard her as a fragile little thing or because they can think of nothing to say about her, almost nobody makes an Elizabeth Warren joke. Even her Republican opponent, Senator Scott Brown, barely acknowledges her, merely spitting over his shoulder, "Professor Warren, it's good to see you. You were a little late, but I'm glad you were able to get out of Cambridge and find your way up here."

Most of the rest of the morning's humor isn't so subdued. Lieutenant Governor Tim Murray, who recently honored Massachusetts's long tradition of fishy car accidents involving Democratic nabobs by totaling a state vehicle in the very most wee hours of the morning while barreling down icy roads at 108 miles per hour—and then claiming he was just up bright-'n'-early to get a cup of coffee and inspect snowstorm damage—enters in full NASCAR regalia, bearing a tray of Starbucks. Brown made headlines by quipping that Rick Santorum's new Secret Service detail represents "the first time he's ever actually used protection," and now makes a few jokes about himself and his fellow Republicans: "Mine the moon? Newt Gingrich ought to mine whatever planet Ron Paul is from."

Elizabeth Warren doesn't do self-deprecating—she just can't. Her humor is of the self-aggrandizing sort: In mockery of Brown's famous *Cosmopolitan* spread, she shows an image of herself as a centerfold in *Consumer Reports*. She opens with: "I'm the daughter of a maintenance man, who became a professor and fought against big Wall Street Banks. If that doesn't ring a bell, you might remember me as the elitist professor from Hollywood who's running against Scott Brown." And then there are crickets.

The joke goes down like a Soviet airliner in no small part because she told precisely the same joke yesterday at another St. Patrick's Day event, in front of a lot of the same people. But that isn't the only problem: The point of the roast is to laugh at politicians, not to be reminded by politicians of how awesome said politicians are. Behind every rolled eye and polite cough that greets Warren's foundering attempts at humor is the unspoken thought: "Yeah, we know: You grew up in modest circumstances in Muskogee or wherever and think of yourself as a consumer advocate. Super. Say something funny, you insufferable snoot." But she does put in the work, clapping along unrhythmically like a poorly trained SeaWorld porpoise while the band plays "Whiskey in the Jar"—a song that, like most of the Southie anthems sung this morning, she plainly does not know the words to.

"Shrill." "Hard." "Wound-up." These are the first three adjectives offered by a group of observers asked why Warren is having a tough time against Brown in a state in which Republicans are about as welcome as head lice. The young ladies in question are wearing Elizabeth Warren buttons.

The hard thing about being a populist? The damned people.

Elizabeth Warren is what Thomas Jefferson would have recognized as one of nature's aristocrats, which is one of the reasons she is so manifestly uncomfortable around *hoi polloi*, a Democrat who does not want to be so much as downwind from the *demos* in the flesh. Life can be cruel to natural aristocrats, especially in politics. Also high school. She makes much—too much—

of her humble background, particularly of her father's having worked as a janitor. Brown had it pretty rough as a young man, too: His mother was none too capable a parent, he spent part of his childhood on welfare and a great deal of it surrounded by domestic violence of varying degrees of intensity, and he was sexually abused by a camp counselor when he was a child. Warren's story is a bit more complicated than she lets on: Her father was employed as a maintenance man, and before that he had held a number of middle-class jobs, including one as a salesman at a department store. At one point, he had saved up enough money to start a promising business—a car dealership—but, as Warren tells the story, he got swindled out of his life's savings by an unscrupulous business partner. Later, a heart attack cost him another job. Warren's mother went to work and was bitter about it, and a few missed car payments meant that the family's Oldsmobile, that sturdy mid-century symbol of middle-class life, was repossessed. Young Elizabeth, wracked with status anxiety, made her father drop her off a few blocks from school so that her fellow students would not see their new, less prestigious car. Her family's story is not one of hereditary poverty and privation but one of a downwardly mobile middle-class family hit by bad luck and bad decisions.

Happily, that rough spot didn't last forever. The Oldsmobile was gone, but by the time she was 16 years old, Warren had a car of her own, and there were two more in the family—not too shabby for Oklahoma in 1965. Her family struggled, but they were also able to buy a house in a nice neighborhood, which allowed young Elizabeth to attend an elite public school, a springboard to her later education and smashing professional success. She's written popular books and served in government, while her endowed chair at Harvard Law pays her more than $350,000 a year. Her husband also occupies an endowed chair at Harvard Law. The two share a multi-million-dollar home in Cambridge, a multi-million-dollar investment portfolio (including a large position in notorious corporate-income-tax minimizer IBM, which recently paid an annual net effective rate of 3.8 percent), and a net worth of up to $14.5 million, according to Warren's financial-disclosure statements. The Warrens' net worth dwarfs that of the Browns, which is at most $2.3 million. (Yeah, pity.)

But though she is much wealthier than he, Warren and Brown resemble each other far more than they resemble most of their constituents. Each is a testament to the fact that in the brutal meritocracy that is the United States of America, smart and energetic people rise, almost unstoppably, and the increasingly high returns to individual performance mean that those at the top live lives very different from that of Joe Median. Neither Warren nor Brown attended an Ivy League university, neither had family connections or social standing. Both worked in professions that they would later abandon: Warren taught public school briefly and then quit rather than go through the obligatory, despair-inducing credentialing rigmarole (a fact that speaks better of her than almost anything else you'll learn), and Brown was, famously, a model. Both gravitated toward the surest shortcut to wealth and security in this litigious republic—law school. Both took an interest in politics in their early years, and both have made ugly concessions to political reality: Warren may rail against Wall Street wagering and the "army of lobbyists" in Washington, but her campaign is run by a particularly grim casino lobbyist.

And therein lies the critical contrast between the two: Brown is a moderate Republican, a member of a party that believes, to the extent that it believes anything, that in a free and competitive economy, talent and drive will in most cases bring success, and Brown is a gold-plated example of the fact that this is true. Warren is a member of a party that believes, to the extent that it believes anything, that the deck is impossibly stacked against the middle class, and she is a gold-plated example of the fact that this is false. Brown's implicit message is: "I did it, and so can you." Warren's implicit message is: "I did it, and you don't have a prayer."

Warren's view is exaggerated to the point of falsity, but there is grain of truth in it, even if it is a truth that Warren cannot understand or will not admit.

The fact is, Warren's career model is not available to the great majority of the middle class, to say nothing of the poor. She has written a boring little financial self-help book (heavy on phrases such as "the Lifetime of Riches investment strategy"), but her path to prosperity, if she were to document it honestly, would look like this: 1) Get born with an XXL brain; 2) become an endowed professor at Harvard with a salary in the middle six figures and another six-figure payday from speaking and consulting fees; 3) marry same. The secret to a 1 percent lifestyle is, in Warren's case as in so many others, having a 1 percent brain. Most people are not packing the cerebral heat to do what Warren has done, no matter how much they want it, no matter how hard they work. You can rail against the iniquities of Wall Street, but there is a scarcity of college graduates who have the quantitative skills to fill even grunt-level back-office jobs in financial firms.

Warren wrote an(other) unimpressive little book, *The Two-Income Trap*, in which she argues that contemporary two-income families are in many ways worse off than single-income families were a generation or so ago, back during the golden years of the post-war boom, with less financial security and less disposable income. That is true: Men's inflation-adjusted incomes peaked in 1973, and household incomes have risen in real terms since then only because so many women have entered the work force, making single-income families into two-income families. Household incomes per capita have climbed, too, but mostly because the size of households has decreased as Americans have had fewer children. (What else happened in 1973 that might in part explain decreasing household size? Discuss among yourselves.)

She and her co-author (who is also her daughter—because the 99 percent *hates* nepotism) cite all kinds of financial pressures on the middle class—rising child-care costs, college tuition, health-care expenses—and offer an array of policy prescriptions ranging from the mild (decoupling public-school assignments from geography) to the Swedish (subsidizing stay-at-home parents) to the authoritarian (a government-imposed freeze on college tuitions, drastic credit-market restrictions of the sort that Warren's Consumer Financial Protection Bureau was empanelled to dream up some years later), but the two show themselves to be shockingly shallow in their analysis of the underlying economic facts: The post-war era was an extraordinary economic period, for the United States and for the world. Just as Warren's career path does not represent much of a realistic recommendation to the individual striver, the post-war era does not offer much in the way of policy guidance to the 21st-century politician, unless we are seriously willing to entertain replicating the conditions that obtained in 1950 and thereafter, which would necessitate the rest of the world's destroying its industrial infrastructure in a war that was pretty much the

worst thing to have happened to the human race up until that point, with the United States and Canada practically alone in surviving unscathed. You don't get the post-war boom without the war, and in any case it doesn't last forever.

In her ceaseless hunt for a villain and in her refusal to account for the facts of economic history, Warren as an economic thinker very closely resembles another progressive lawyer, Robert Reich, and both of these lawyers seem to believe that our economic difficulties are the result of having put the wrong lawyers in charge of things, as though we could pass a law against scarcity and in favor of productivity. To a lawyer, everything is a question of law, and Warren has made her name by putting Wall Street on trial, at least rhetorically. It is precisely this kind of economic romanticism that has made her the marquee candidate of Occupy Wall Street and its economically illiterate sympathizers, and it is why she is in effect running a national campaign for a statewide office. She may laugh off jokes about her being the professor from Hollywood, but look where she goes when she needs to raise money.

But her appeal is not limited to economic illiterates. Some time back, I wrote an essay for *The New Criterion* in which I argued that a typical American couple making a modest income would do far better in retirement if they invested most of the money that they would have paid in Social Security taxes, putting aside 10 percent of their income with an expectation of a 7 percent return. Among those who took the time to scoff was Susan Webber (writing under her pseudonym, "Yves Smith," of the blog Naked Capitalism), a highly regarded analyst of the U.S. financial system and a trenchant critic of Wall Street. She argued that both of my assumptions were nuttier than pecan pie: Nobody is going to invest 10 percent, and nobody is going to make 7 percent back. As late as August of 2011, Webber was arguing that Warren should run for president of these United States—as a challenger to Barack Obama, Wall Street stooge and marionette of the 1 percent. If my assumptions were the financial equivalent of unicorns exflatulating distilled sunshine, I wonder what Webber makes of Warren's model. For my sins, I have recently digested Warren's schlocky self-help book *All Your Worth*, in which she suggests that families of modest means should be saving 20 percent of their income and expecting a 12 percent return, roughly doubling down on my optimism. Webber, *quelle surprise*, has not addressed that proposition. The appeal of us-and-them stories is powerful.

Warren's advice in *All Your Worth* is, for the most part, pretty solid—and pretty banal. It is precisely the sort of thinking you'd hear if you walked into the office of any halfway competent personal financial adviser in Poughkeepsie or Springfield: Invest in low-cost index funds, pay down your credit cards and other debt, keep a cash reserve, don't buy a house unless you can put at least 10 percent down and preferably 20 percent, shop for better mortgage and insurance rates, don't take out home-equity loans, etc. She's Dave Ramsey without the wit or the evangelical fervor.

But if you'd taken her advice in 2006, when the book was published, you'd have missed the opportunity of a lifetime. In fact, you'd have been better off taking precisely the opposite of her advice. The one investment that Warren really warns her readers off from is gold, which has returned about 320 percent since her book was being written in late 2005. If you'd taken that 20 percent down payment and put it into gold, the tripling of that investment and the crash in housing

prices would have probably allowed you to pay cash by now for the house you'd been thinking about buying.

Does that mean that Warren gives bad financial advice? No, it simply means that financial life is unpredictable, and that it is easy to make a compelling case for what one *obviously* should have done in retrospect. Unfortunately, nobody gets to invest in hindsight—not homeowners, not Wall Street, not Warren. But that lesson remains entirely lost on the lady from Cambridge, who apparently still believes that Lehman Bros. and the rest of the Wall Street kingpins filled their *own* books up with radioactive mortgage-backed securities because they thought they were a *bad* investment, rather than because they thought—wrongly—that they were a pretty good investment. (She repeated that argument as recently as November 2011 during a *Morning Joe* interview.) Villains must be identified and crucified, plain facts be damned. And that is really the truth that Elizabeth Warren is speaking when she says of Occupy Wall Street: "I created much of the intellectual foundation for what they do."

Warren is everything her admirers say she is—smart, tough, principled—and almost everything her critics say—out of touch, ideological, narrow. The one inaccurate barb thrown at her is that she's homely—"Granny Warren," Senator Brown's factota call her. She isn't. If she were lined up at a party with a representative cross section of 62-year-old American women, Warren would be the one you'd ask to dance. But there is a meanness in her, a nasty little puritanical streak gone left, and her secularized Puritanism is probably the most Massachusetts thing about her. Like Hillary Clinton, she has Methodist roots and cites the Wesleyan approach as key to the development of her political thinking. (How Protestant is she? She was conspicuous in failing to cross herself when the priest at the St. Pat's event got to the Trinitarian part of his blessing, even though the *signum crucis* is a common feature of Methodist worship.) It would not be inaccurate to call her political career a crusade.

The question is, Does Massachusetts want a crusader? Senator Brown has been anything but one—he's a deal-making, favor-trading, ideology-eschewing politico about one degree removed from being the new Olympia Snowe. There is an element in Massachusetts that wants to Occupy the Senate, even though the economy of Boston is heavily reliant upon finance. But Warren isn't about Boston, or Southie, or even Cambridge, much less Pittsfield or Monson. She is the single most important bridge between the Democratic party and the trans-Democratic Left. She doesn't represent a place, but a state of mind.

You can take the girl out of Oklahoma and, contrary to the proverb, you can take the Oklahoma out of the girl, too, if you work at it long enough. (A notable fact about Warren is that she has never been to a class reunion.) But a scholarly study of "Charlie on the MTA" isn't going to gain her admittance to the tribe of Jameson-sipping, milk-faced South Bostonians, either. There's no whiskey in her jar, and for Warren, no politics is local—it's Occupy Wall Street, Occupy the Senate, Occupy Everywhere.

April 30, 2012

Big &#%!ing Joker: On the Comedy Routine that Is Joe Biden's Vice Presidency

By Jonah Goldberg

An August 26, 2008, *Politico* story began: "During his first full day of solo campaigning, newly minted Democratic vice presidential candidate Joe Biden showed some of the flashes of the hyperbole, exaggerations and quips that Republicans are hoping to use to paint him as a loose cannon."

For instance?

According to Kenneth Vogel, the reporter, the elder statesman of the Democratic party thanked God that one of his audiences was mostly female. "He also said he didn't care about the press, that Obama has a 'sixth sense' and Delaware Gov. Ruth Ann Minner has 'the most incredible story in American politics,' that he and Barack Obama had 'the most incredible opportunity . . . since Franklin Roosevelt.' And he choked up a handful of times, once wiping away tears after proclaiming that having a chance to be vice president pales in comparison to representing Delaware in the Senate."

He also proclaimed that Michelle Obama's convention speech was "the most remarkable speech I have heard in my life" and prophesied that it would propel the Obama-Biden ticket to victory.

Now, on the standard-issue Biden-o-Meter that I have been carrying around like a post-apocalyptic Geiger counter, measuring the parts per billion of asininity, some of these comments don't even move the needle. Still, it was pretty good for a day's work, especially considering that Biden had already given the gaffe-watch industry some much-needed stimulus when he introduced his running mate for the first time as "Barack America."

And these statements do capture at least one band in the glorious rainbow that is Biden-speak, specifically its use of the utmost superlative and the exaggeratedly hyperbolic. Governor Minner, at least according to her Wikipedia page, does have a nice rags-to-riches background, but is hers really the "most incredible story in American politics"? (The Republican presidential candidate at the time had spent years being tortured in a bamboo tiger cage while refusing to take early release.) I went back and read Michelle Obama's convention speech. It, too, was nice. But I don't think the myriad books written about the 2008 election need to be rewritten to account for the way her remarks catapulted the ticket to victory. Biden's rhetoric often sounds like a stoned teenager talking about food. "Dude, these Cheetos are the best-tasting things ever!"

The word "literally" has taken a beating in the Age of Biden. He's often proclaimed that Obama had the opportunity "literally to change the direction of the world" (which, if possible,

might help fulfill that promise to lower sea levels). Biden announced that "before we arrived in the West Wing, Mr. Boehner and his party ran the economy and the middle class literally into the ground." His speeches are "literally" festooned with "literally"s, like hundreds of tethers to the hot-air balloon that is his head.

The standard joke is to quote the scene in *The Princess Bride* when Inigo Montoya tells Vizzini, "You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means." The problem is that Biden insists that he does know what it means. One of his favorite ways to emphasize his seriousness is to say, "and I mean literally, not figuratively," as if "literally" meant "I'm really serious" and "figuratively" connoted some effeminate lack of conviction. He says JFK's "call to service literally, not figuratively, still resounds from generation to generation." He told students in Africa, "You are the keystone to East Africa—literally, not figuratively, you are the keystone." "The American people are looking for us as Democrats," he has said. "They're looking for someone literally, not figuratively, to restore America's place in the world." Speaking at a rally for Senator Patty Murray, he said, "I have now gone into 110 races around the country, and everywhere I go I see ordinary people who play by the rules, get everything right, paid their mortgage, showed up in their school helping their kids, made sure that they did everything they could to save to get their kid to college, took their mom and dad in when they needed help and hoped to save a little bit of money so they wouldn't have to rely on their own kids when the time came." Here's the kicker: "And all of a sudden, all of a sudden—literally, not figuratively—they were decimated." If they were literally decimated, Biden doesn't just see ordinary people, he sees dead people. But only one for every nine among the living.

Let's give the poor word some smelling salts and ask it to get back in the ring for a moment. It is literally absurd to say, "This is a guy who walks and talks like someone who grew up in Scranton," as David Wade, Biden's spokesman at the time, told *Politico* in defense of his boss. (It's also not literally true that Biden grew up in Scranton; he left town at the age of ten.) As part of my research for this article, I visited Scranton—not literally, mind you, but literally enough in Joe Biden's America. Statistically speaking, Scrantonites are not more likely than, say, residents of Muncie to instruct a wheelchair-bound man, "Stand up, Chuck, let 'em see ya." In 1929, there were a handful of experimental television sets being developed in discrete locations around the country, but literally none of them were in Scranton. Which explains why very few Scrantonites believe, as Biden explained to Katie Couric, that FDR, who was sworn in as president in 1933, went on national television after the stock-market crash of 1929 to reassure the American people.

The Wade defense—he's authentic! he's real! he literally talks like a real American!—is an explanation much of the press corps uses to rationalize why they don't care about Biden's gaffes. I doubt that all of them believe this, but clearly some do. And those who do are revealing that they hold the American people in remarkably low regard. It's a frightening prospect, really, that large numbers of pols, flacks, and hacks in Washington think we live in a nation of Joe Bidens. Not least because Joe Biden is crazy.

Now I don't mean Joe Biden is literally crazy, just figuratively (although sometimes it is very easy to imagine him at the mental hospital, dressed in stained white PJs, standing on a card table and explaining how the shortage of lime Jell-O is "literally the greatest outrage to be visited

on mankind" since the orderlies took away his fern). Biden's logorrhea dementia is the most popularly diagnosed malady in political life since Bill Clinton's priapism. As a Senate committee chairman, he would often exhaust nearly all of his question time rhetorically wandering off like an Alzheimer's patient in the snow, only to come to his senses at the last second and ask an angry question of the stunned witness or nominee. The poor fellow in the hot seat would usually be caught off guard thanks to the soporifically mesmerizing power of Biden's enormous teeth, which he flashed throughout his sentences like a semaphore to alert the audience: "I can't stop this thing!"

Biden makes up a lot of things, too. And like many eccentrics, he is fond of playing with trains, only his aren't toys, they're billion-dollar boondoggles.

As part of my research, I read Biden's seminal essay "Why America Needs Trains" in *Arrive*—the in-flight magazine, figuratively speaking, of Amtrak's northeast-corridor travelers. You might wonder how he landed the cover, until you remember that he, more than any other public figure, is responsible for pouring billions of dollars into white elephants on rails, largely because riding the train to Delaware is part of his shtick. While zooming past the homes of ordinary Americans at 50 miles an hour, Biden has explained, "I would look out the window and hear their questions, feel their pain." So he hears voices too.

It's interesting to speculate about why Biden is like this. Hillary Clinton has told Biden that "I think you and Bill were separated at birth." She apparently intended it as a compliment, though one can certainly understand why Mrs. Biden, at least, would be eager for some clarification.

Apparently what Hillary meant is that both men are charmers and happy talkers. But the similarities go beyond that. Both men were the products of difficult childhoods and both were determined to show up their detractors. Not only did Biden have a terrible stutter as a child, he was born to privilege yet had to grow up middle-class because of his father's disastrous business decisions (though in his own telling, it often sounds like life for young Joe was Dickensian; it wasn't).

That's all probably true. But Biden also seems driven in no small part by a staggering intellectual insecurity. The figurative evidence room is full of examples. The most notorious comes from Biden's 1988 bid for the Democratic presidential nomination. He had been hounded about his law-school record and plagiarism problems (among other things, he copied five pages from a law journal for a 15-page paper and then claimed it was a footnoting error), and he was asked a question about his academic record by a resident of New Hampshire.

He responded: "I think I have a much higher IQ than you do, I suspect." He went on:

> I went to law school on a full academic scholarship, the only one in my class to have a full academic scholarship. In the first year in the law, I decided I didn't want to be in law school and ended up in the bottom two-thirds of my class and then decided I wanted to stay, went back to law school, and, in fact, ended up in the top half of my class. I won the international moot-court competition. I was the outstanding student in the political-science department at the end of my year. I graduated with three degrees from undergraduate school and 165 credits—only

needed 123 credits. And I would be delighted to sit down and compare my IQ to yours.

Most of these statements were outright lies. Biden graduated from college with just one degree, not three. Yes, he did win a moot-court competition, but he graduated 76th in his class of 85. He wasn't the outstanding political-science student. And why is he still talking about how many credits he graduated with? Who does that?

Biden's intellectual insecurity can be found in his relentless (mis)use of brainy quotations from Internet sites. His speeches are often a rhetorical version of *The Love Boat* with special guest appearances from Aristotle, Milton, Yeats, Plato, and various unnamed poets who, we are nonetheless assured, are famous. As Meghan Clyne documented in *The Weekly Standard*, he often misses the point of the lines he delivers, as when in a nod to Milton he called soldiers slain on the battlefield "fallen angels"—which, strictly speaking, would suggest that the U.S. military is in open rebellion against God. Sometimes he just doesn't quite get his audience, as when he dropped a truth-bomb from G. K. Chesterton: "It's not that Christianity has been tried and found wanting; it's been found difficult and left untried." He was speaking to AIPAC, the Jewish pro-Israel lobby. He also has been caught repeatedly using a fake quote from Virgil. But that's forgivable. We've all been burned that way at some point. As Thomas Jefferson famously said, "Some quotes on the Internet are not reliable."

The best example of his incessant need to work the refs of history, however, remains his penchant for the grandiose exaggeration. This is a real problem for the White House because his hyperbole has the unintended consequence of opening legitimate accomplishments to ridicule. The most famous recent example is his declaration that the raid on Osama bin Laden's compound puts all other military operations to shame. "You can go back 500 years. You cannot find a more audacious plan. Never knowing for certain. We never had more than a 48 percent probability that he was there." He went on: "Do any one of you have a doubt that if that raid failed that this guy would be a one-term president? . . . I'm telling you, man, this guy is not only smart as hell, he is absolutely ready to make the decision and stand back and live with it. No whining."

The Normandy invasion, the raid on Entebbe, the Inchon landing, Gallipoli, the capture of Adolf Eichmann? Cakewalks! My favorite part is the "48 percent certainty" bit. Where does this number come from? Do people in the White House actually believe they can predict the future (never mind military operations in Pakistan) with that kind of granular precision? These are the same people, recall, who had to discover on the job that there's no such thing as shovel-ready jobs. Where was their supercomputer crystal ball for that stuff?

Notice as well Biden's measure of what qualifies as bravery: This was a courageous operation because it risked Obama's reelection effort. The White House immediately compounded this shamefulness by citing the success of the mission as a reason to back Obama's domestic agenda. "On immigration reform, he keeps pushing to get it done," explained White House spokesman Jay Carney in a pathetic effort to clarify the point. "And I think that that was reflected in his approach to dealing with Osama bin Laden." Then, in this year's State of the Union address, Obama openly yearned for an America that cooperated as obediently as the SEAL team that took

out bin Laden. If the White House didn't care about politics going into the operation, it's obvious politics is all they cared about coming out.

One reason we were told Biden was an inspired veep choice was that he lent the ticket "gravitas." But as Mickey Kaus quipped at the time, "He doesn't have gravitas. He has seniority." Indeed, nobody in Washington save Biden himself thinks the man has gravitas. That's why it was funny when Obama emasculated him like a quarterback razzing the waterboy during his first address to Congress. "Nobody messes with Joe!" he yelled, stopping just short of turning around and giving Biden a noogie.

Another argument, one made by Obama himself, was that Biden, with his years of legislative experience, would prove extremely useful corralling Republicans in Congress. Where's even the figurative evidence for that? Yet another argument was that Biden would offer sage counsel on foreign affairs. This was an interesting theory given Biden's record. He opposed Reagan's defense buildup, hailed Mikhail Gorbachev's "pragmatic" leadership almost until the moment the Soviet Union disappeared, opposed the first Gulf War, supported the second—an interesting fact given the central role opposition to the war played in Obama's election—bragged about being the real author of the PATRIOT Act, and has always and everywhere claimed credit for successes whether he had anything to do with them or not (one notable exception: He opposed the operation to get bin Laden). "For all Biden's twaddle about doctrines and concepts," Andrew C. McCarthy wrote in NATIONAL REVIEW in 2008, "there is a simple technique for divining this foreign-policy solon's bobs and weaves: Consult the polls and the calendar."

In an interview with *Esquire* magazine, David Axelrod explained that while Obama had high hopes for Biden as an emissary to Republicans and admired his foreign-policy acumen, the real reason he picked Biden was that the two just get along so well and see eye to eye with each other.

Aha. Now we're on to something. After all, this is the president who claimed he would lower the seas and has authored two autobiographies. This is the president who complained of having to campaign in all 57 states ("I think [I have] one left to go," he added). This is the president who recently got burned with a fake Internet quote about Rutherford B. Hayes's hating the telephone, and who proclaimed that America built the "intercontinental railroad." This is the president who once tried to sell his health-care reform by noting that "UPS and FedEx are doing just fine, right? It's the Post Office that's always having problems." Who once told Jake Tapper, "You're absolutely right that John McCain has not talked about my Muslim faith." Who tried to preemptively condemn judicial review of Obamacare as "unprecedented." Who is quoted, in Richard Wolffe's book *Renegade*, as saying, "You know, I actually believe my own bulls***."

When you have a straight man like that, you need a special kind of sidekick to make the team work. And good ol' Joe is certainly special.

February 2, 2018

The Brummagem Obama: Cory Booker Fails the Audition

By Kyle Smith

As acting performances by former jocks go, it was right up there, or down there, with the work of André the Giant in *Conan the Destroyer* or Shaquille O'Neal in *Kazaam*. Politics is, in part, theater, and Cory Booker's one-man show on January 17 proved it can be really bad theater. To make it all the way to where Booker thinks he's heading, you first have to pass the audition to play the American president. Ronald Reagan was a pro. Bill Clinton could do it: He bit his lower lip, he felt our pain. Barack Obama became a plausible potential president the night he so artfully portrayed a centrist at the 2004 Democratic National Convention.

But the junior senator from New Jersey, a former Stanford tight end and Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, is in dire need of some acting lessons. The fake tirade he performed for the camera while a stone-faced Kirstjen Nielsen sat waiting for him to finish was so hollow, calculated, and forced that any drama teacher who saw it would have patted Booker on the shoulder and said, "Son, the theater isn't for everybody."

The head of Homeland Security had already explained in the hearing that she hadn't caught every word said by every person in the contentious twelve-person meeting at which President Trump reportedly derided certain countries as excrement pits. "What I was struck with, frankly, as I'm sure you were as well, was just the general profanity that was used in the room by almost everyone," Nielsen said. Trump may have said the word in her presence, but because people were talking over one another, she didn't catch it. Not that it much mattered, since Donald Trump's word choices are hardly Kirstjen Nielsen's fault. "I can't testify to what I don't know," she said.

What Nielsen had to say was of little interest to Booker, who had brought a pre-printed tirade along for the occasion. "When Dick Durbin called me, I had tears of rage when I heard about his experience in that meeting," Booker said, trying hard to bellow. "And for you not to feel that hurt and that pain, and to dismiss some of the questions of my colleagues, saying 'I've already answered that line of questions,' when tens of millions of Americans are hurting right now because of what they're worried about what happened in the White House—that's unacceptable to me! There are threats in this country! People plotting!" He added, "I receive enough death threats to know the reality," as though that had anything to do with the person seated across from him.

Booker was so minimally acquainted with his own emotions that he had to keep glancing down at the notes containing his pre-scripted rage as Nielsen sat like a hostage for eleven excruciating minutes. As he vented at Nielsen, with his button eyes, his round face, and his awkwardly outstretched arms, he looked as incensed as a teddy bear.

For 72 hours, like a toddler equipped with a new naughty word, the entire news media could speak of nothing but Trump's alleged excrement-hole epithet, and Booker may have figured that bringing it up on camera, using any pretext whatsoever, would spur media coverage and one of those viral moments the kids love. Is Booker running for president? He ain't running to be backbencher for life. "I'm the most ambitious person you'd ever meet," he told a reporter when he was running for the city council in Newark in 1998, his first political job.

But the Democratic field for 2020 is set to be more jammed than the Beltway when a long week of federal work winds up on Friday at 3 p.m. Even John Kerry says he wants to run. On the betting site 5dimes, Booker was recently rated a 33–1 underdog to capture the presidency in 2020, well behind colleagues Elizabeth Warren (12–1), Kamala Harris (14–1), and Kirsten Gillibrand (16–1), not to mention Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson (28–1).

Booker needs to break out of the cluttered field of long shots. There are two generally accepted paths to the presidency. One is a record of accomplishment, and there even The Rock has him beat. The other is creating a cult of personality. So Booker apparently intends to grandstand, emote, preach, and generally provide emotional reflection to the party base by pretending to be as riled up as they actually are.

Unfortunately, the Nielsen episode is the latest signal that Booker is the brummagem Obama. If Obama was the Democrats' Frank Sinatra, Booker is their Vic Damone. If Obama was their shining star, Booker is their rhinestone lapel pin. Where Obama had an inspiring American journey, Booker had an imaginary friend called T-Bone, the emotionally incontinent drug dealer who supposedly wept on Booker's shoulder one time but disappeared from his speeches after a friend told him to knock it off with the degrading stereotypes of black street characters (as NATIONAL REVIEW reported in 2013).

Booker's evidently staged rant at Nielsen was not only staggeringly off-putting, it was equally off-brand. It's true that Booker had already broken with Senate precedent at the confirmation hearing of Attorney General Jeff Sessions to lambaste his then–fellow senator as an enemy of civil rights. But Booker, like Obama, has for years put in a lot of work trying to pose as a judicious, business-friendly, Wall Street–accepted Democrat. He has spent many an evening in Manhattan schmoozing bankers, and he defended the private-equity business when Obama attacked Bain Capital. In 2015, he even made a cameo appearance on NBC's sitcom *Parks and Recreation*, clowning with Orrin Hatch in a gag about how the two (playing themselves) were so chummy that they had formed a Polynesian folk-music band called "Across the Aisle."

As recently as an October 2017 address to the North Carolina NAACP, Booker wanted to be seen as opposing Donald Trump more in sorrow than in anger. "Don't be one of those people I catch calling our president nasty names," Booker told that gathering. "I'm serious. How can you think that you're going to beat darkness by spewing darkness? If Nelson Mandela can love his jailers, if Martin Luther King can love Bull Connor—we've got to be people of love!" On CNN during the 2016 Democratic Convention, Booker said, "I love Donald Trump." Much as Obama wore out the phrase "audacity of hope," Booker was in the habit of talking up a "conspiracy of love," a phrase that is the title of the first chapter of his oleaginous February 2016 book *United:*

Thoughts on Finding Common Ground and Advancing the Common Good. (Contrast with Senator Warren's recent books: *This Fight Is Our Fight* and *A Fighting Chance*.)

Booker probably calculated that his politeness would create a pleasing contrast with the insult shrapnel flying out of the Oval Office. Instead, he discovered that in the Trump era, Trumpism has proved especially infectious among the president's detractors. Remember when news anchors didn't use words like "p***y" and "sh**hole," much less build their coverage around them and blast out chyrons with the uncensored words scrolling across the screen 24/7? As Bill Maher might say: New rule! Everything the president says is bad, so everybody else should say it, too.

As his party turned professionally pugilistic, Booker was starting to look like a pusillanimous pussyfooter. About-face! Join the resistance! Berate any random Trump official who wanders into your line of sight! It was the long-serving Democratic congressman and senator from Arizona Carl Hayden (1877–1972) who said that when he first arrived in the House, in 1912, weeks after Arizona became a state, an old-timer took him aside to say, "If you want to get your name in the papers, be a show horse. But if you want to win the respect of your colleagues, be a workhorse." Booker couldn't be more of a show pony if he changed his name to "Buttercup."

But unlike the last show horse who paraded through the Senate on his way to the White House, Booker made the colossal error of taking a leadership position that was bound to yield quantifiable results for which he could be held accountable. No doubt Booker thought that said position, the mayoralty of Newark, which he held from 2006 to 2013, was a launching pad where there was a low risk of blowing himself up. Newark had been corrupt, crime-ridden, and mismanaged for so long, how could it go anywhere but up? Newark was the Arkansas of cities, and, after all, presiding over the modest gains that took place in that state had proved enough to make Bill Clinton a presidential contender. Yet Booker's Newark interlude was a dud. "Cory Booker's Newark Mirage," ran the headline of a 2016 essay in *Politico*.

A few years earlier, Booker had earned the social-media sobriquet "Superman" for what appeared at first blush to be the nation's first full-service mayoralty. He rescued a woman from her burning house. He delivered diapers to a snowbound mom. He helped shovel out another snowbound resident.

As his seven-year stint went on, though, the mayor came to seem like one of those absentee dads who periodically turn up to thrill the children with a whirlwind trip to Six Flags but are unavailable for the more prosaic raking of leaves, supporting of emotions, or bringing home of paychecks. The *Star-Ledger*, a Newark paper, once calculated that Booker was out of town for 118 days in a single 18-month period.

The woman who was the grateful recipient of the diapers marvels at how Booker created that viral moment out of his own failure: "The only reason he brought me Pampers was that it had been three days and our street hadn't been plowed," she told *Politico*. "I have five kids and, trust me, I don't just run out of Pampers. All we wanted was for him to plow our streets. It's about knowing how to manage a city." In the upside-down era of tweet-based politics, in a city where reporters don't live, to leave entire neighborhoods crippled by neglecting routine municipal

services is a boring lapse, hence invisible to the world. Yet a single meaningless, cute stunt creates headlines. The fire rescue looks a little different in a policy context, too. Booker had shut down three of Newark's fire companies, while laying off more than 160 cops and leaving the police department with its smallest force in decades.

In Newark, Booker raised taxes 20 percent and cut services amid feeble boasts such as his line about doubling "affordable housing" to all of 2,500 units, in a city whose population is 280,000. Getting the downtown Prudential Center built by steering $200 million to it from the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey looked like simple raiding of the public coffers to line the pockets of the rich. Isn't the trick to running a city to get corporations to *want* to do business there, not to pay them to do so?

A Booker buddy, schools superintendent Cami Anderson, famously presided over the squandering of a $100 million gift to the city schools. (Mark Zuckerberg had announced the massive donation as desperate damage control two days before the New York Film Festival premiere of the Zuckerberg-bashing movie *The Social Network* in 2010.) The Newark Watershed Conservation Authority, a nonprofit agency overseeing the city's water and sewers, was rife with corruption under Booker's watch—its executive director, his pal Linda Watkins-Brashear, got sentenced to eight years in prison for her part in a kickback scheme. Booker's former law firm continued to pay him while he was mayor, to the tune of nearly $700,000 over six years, even as that firm was scoring $2 million worth of contracts from the watershed authority and such public agencies as the Newark Housing Authority.

Booker's spokeswoman, speaking to reporters at the time, unconvincingly explained that the payouts to Booker were for work he had done before departing the firm. As for the corruption in the watershed authority, Booker offered the feeble response that he hadn't gone to many meetings and didn't know what was happening. In October, Booker (along with Lindsey Graham) even appeared as a character witness at the corruption trial in Newark of fellow Democrat Bob Menendez. The New Jersey senior senator has "never let me down," Booker said, adding, "Bob Menendez is trustworthy and honest; he doesn't candy-coat things." Menendez stands accused of helping a physician crony with an $8.9 million Medicaid dispute in return for valuable gifts such as flights on a private jet. (That proceeding ended in a mistrial after the jury couldn't come to an agreement, but prosecutors have promised to retry Menendez.)

Crime, reversing a downward trend nationally, actually rose in Newark under Booker, and there were more murders and violent crimes the year he left (2013) than the year he assumed office. Only Detroit and New Orleans suffered higher murder rates in 2013. The local perception of Booker seems to differ from Ellen DeGeneres's take when she welcomed him on her show to present him with a Superman costume: A Qunnipiac University poll from May 2017 found that only 33 percent of voters in New Jersey think he should run for president, against 54 percent who think he shouldn't.

A reformer who didn't reform much of anything, a centrist turned rabid partisan, a superhero imbued only with the power of self-promotion, Cory Booker already seems past his political prime. If you're wondering why the 2020 Democratic primary is shaping up to be the

political version of *Tales from the Crypt*, with dusty relics such as Elizabeth Warren, Bernie Sanders, and Joe Biden being paraded as the future of the party, consider that the young hotshot Booker doesn't seem to have much of a message except phony seething and ersatz anger.

July 6, 2015

Adventures in National Socialism: Notes from a Weekend with Bernie

By Kevin Williamson

Marshalltown, Iowa—"All foreign-made vehicles park in designated area in rear of building." So reads the sign in front of United Auto Workers Local 893 in Marshalltown, Iowa, though nobody is bothered much about the CNN satellite truck out front, a Daimler-AG Freightliner proudly declaring itself "Powered by Mercedes-Benz," nor about the guys doggedly and earnestly unpacking yard signs and $15 T-shirts and rolls of giveaway stickers from a newish Subaru, all that swag bearing the face and/or logo of Senator Bernie Sanders, the confessing socialist from Brooklyn representing Vermont in the Senate who is, in his half-assed and almost endearingly low-rent way, challenging Hillary Rodham Clinton for the Democratic presidential nomination. The bumper stickers on the mainly foreign-made cars of his followers tell the story: One of those "Peace" (not the more popular "Coexist") slogans made of various world religious symbols, "Clean Water Is for Life!" and "The Warren Wing of the Democratic Party," sundry half-literate denunciations of "Corporate Oligarchy" . . . "Not Just Gay—Ecstatic!"

The union hall, like the strangely church-like auditorium at Drake University the night before, was chosen with calculation. Bernie—he's "Bernie," not Senator Sanders or Mr. Sanders or that weirdo socialist from Soviet Beninjerristan, just lovable, cuddly "Bernie," like a grumpy Muppet who spent too much time around the Workers World party back in the day—our Bernie may not be the slickest practitioner of the black arts of electioneering, but he's got some smart people on his small team, and they are smart enough to book him in rooms with capacities that are about 85 percent of the modest crowds they are expecting, thereby creating the illusion of overflow audiences. They do all the usual tedious stuff, such as planting volunteers in the audience to shout on cue, "Yes, yes!" and the occasional Deanesque "Yeaaaaaaah!" It's all very familiar. Sanders, as stiff a member as Congress has to offer, repeatedly refers to the audience as "brothers and sisters," and the union bosses greet one another as "brother," and you get the feeling that after a beer or three one of these characters is going to slip up and let out a "comrade."

If it's anybody, it's probably going to be the grandmotherly lady in the hammer-and-sickle T-shirt. She's well inclined toward Bernie, she says, though she distrusts his affiliation with the

Democratic party. "He's part of . . . *them*," she says, grimacing. "Yeah," says her friend, who stops to think for a moment. "He's a senator, right?"

Aside from Grandma Stalin there, there's not a lot of overtly Soviet iconography on display around the Bernieverse, but the word "socialism" is on a great many lips. Not Bernie's lips, for heaven's sake: The guy's running for president. But Tara Monson, a young mother who has come out to the UAW hall to support her candidate, is pretty straightforward about her issues: "Socialism," she says. "My husband's been trying to get me to move to a socialist country for years—but now, maybe, we'll get it here." The socialist country she has in mind is Norway, which of course isn't a socialist country at all: It's an oil emirate. Monson is a classic American radical, which is to say, a wounded teenager in an adult's body: Asked what drew her to socialism and Bernie, she says that she is "very atheist," and that her Catholic parents were not accepting of this. She goes on to cite her "social views," and by the time she gets around to the economic questions, she's not Helle Thorning-Schmidt—she's Pat Buchanan, complaining about "sending our jobs overseas."

L'Internationale, my patootie. This is *national* socialism.

In the Bernieverse, there's a whole lot of nationalism mixed up in the socialism. He is, in fact, leading a national-socialist movement, which is a queasy and uncomfortable thing to write about a man who is the son of Jewish immigrants from Poland and whose family was largely wiped out in the Holocaust. But there is no other way to characterize his views and his politics. The incessant reliance on xenophobic (and largely untrue) tropes holding that the current economic woes of the United States are the result of scheming foreigners, especially the wicked Chinese, "stealing our jobs" and victimizing his class allies is nothing more than an updated version of Kaiser Wilhelm II's "yellow peril" rhetoric, and though the kaiser had a more poetical imagination—he said he had a vision of the Buddha riding a dragon across Europe, laying waste to all—Bernie's take is substantially similar. He describes the normalization of trade relations with China as "catastrophic"—Sanders and Jesse Helms both voted against the Clinton-backed China-trade legislation—and heaps scorn on every other trade-liberalization pact. That economic interactions with foreigners are inherently hurtful and immoral is central to his view of how the world works.

Bernie bellows that he remembers a time when you could walk into a department store and "buy things made in the U.S.A." Before the "Made in China" panic, there was the "Made in Japan" panic of the 1950s and 1960s, and the products that provoked that panic naturally went on to be objects of nostalgia. (A quarter century ago, the artist Roger Handy published a book of photographs titled "Made in Japan: Transistor Radios of the 1950s and 1960s.") Like most of these advocates of "economic patriotism" (Barack Obama's favored phrase) Bernie worries a great deal about trade with brown people—Asians, Latin Americans—but has never, so far as public records show, made so much as a peep about our very large trade deficit with Sweden, which as a share of bilateral trade volume is about the same as our trade deficit with China, or about the size of our trade deficit with Canada, our largest trading partner. Sanders doesn't rail about the Canadians stealing our jobs—his ire is reserved almost exclusively for the Chinese and the Mexicans, as when

he demanded of Hillary Rodham Clinton, in the words of the old protest song, "Which side are you on?" The bad guys, or American workers "seeing their jobs go to China or Mexico?"

But for the emerging national socialist, dusky people abroad are not the only problem. I speak with Bernie volunteer McKinly Springer, an earnest young man whose father worked for the UAW local hosting the rally. He's very interested in policies that interpose the government between employers and employees—for example, mandatory paid maternity and paternity leave. He lived for a time in Germany, first studying abroad and then working for Bosch, an automotive-parts company. He is a great admirer of the German welfare state, saying: "I ask myself: Why do they have these nice things, and we can't?" I ask him to answer his own question, and his answer is at once familiar and frightening: "Germany is very homogeneous. They have lots of white people. We're very diverse. We have the melting pot, and that's a big struggle."

That the relative success of the Western European welfare states, and particularly of the Scandinavian states, is rooted in cultural and ethnic homogeneity is a longstanding conservative criticism of Bernie-style schemes to re-create the Danish model in New Jersey and Texas and Mississippi. The conservative takeaway is: Don't build a Scandinavian welfare state in Florida. But if you understand the challenges of diversity and you still want to build a Scandinavian welfare state, or at least a German one, that points to some uncomfortable conclusions. Indeed, one very worked-up young man confronts Bernie angrily about his apparent unwillingness to speak up more robustly about his liberal views on illegal immigration. Springer gets a few sentences into a disquisition on ethnic homogeneity when a shadow crosses his face, as though he is for the first time thinking through the ugly implications of what he believes in light of what he knows. He trails off, looking troubled.

Bernie, who represents the second-whitest state in the union, may not have thought too hard about this. But the Left is thinking about it: T. A. Frank, writing in *The New Republic*, argues that progressives should oppose Obama's immigration-reform plans because poor foreigners flooding our labor markets will undercut the wages of low-income Americans. Cheap foreign cars, cheap foreign labor—you can see the argument.

"Conservatives can identify each other by smell—did you know that?" He's an older gentleman, neatly dressed in a pink button-down shirt, his slightly unruly white hair and cracked demeanor calling to mind the presidential candidate he is here to evaluate. He's dead serious, too, and it's not just Republicans' sniffing one another's butts that's on his mind. He goes on a good-humored tirade about how one can identify conservatives' and progressives' homes simply by walking down the street and observing the landscaping. Conservatives, he insists, "torture" the flowers and shrubbery, imposing strict order and conformity on their yards, whereas progressives just let things bloom as nature directs. I am tempted to ask him which other areas in life he thinks might benefit from that kind of unregulated, spontaneous order, but I think better of it. One of Sanders's workers, a young Occupy veteran, shoots me an eye-rolling look: Crazy goes with the territory.

Here in a dreary, rundown, hideous little corner of Des Moines dotted with dodgy-looking bars and dilapidated groceries advertising their willingness to accept EBT payments sits Drake

University, where Bernie is speaking at Sheslow Auditorium, a kind of mock church—spire, stained glass, double staircase leading down to the podium for communion—that is the perfect setting for the mock-religious fervor that the senator brings to the stump. He is a clumsy speaker, pronouncing "oligarchy"—a word he uses in every speech—as though he were starting to say "à la mode." He's one of those rhetorical oafs whose only dynamic modulations are sudden shifts in volume—he's the oratorical equivalent of every Nirvana song ever written—and he is undisciplined, speaking for an hour and then pressing right through, on and on, feeling the need to check off every progressive box, as though new orbiters in the Bernieverse might think him a Rick Santorum–level pro-lifer if he didn't lay his pro-choice credentials out on the table at least once during every speech. "Brothers and sisters, . . ." repeatedly: global warming, $15 minimum wage, putting an end to free trade, gays, gays, abortion, gays, lies about women making only 78 cents on the male dollar, mass transit, gays and abortion and gays, Kochs and Waltons and hedge-fund managers!

He does not suggest that conservatives can literally sniff one another out pheromonally, but the idea that his political opponents are a tribe apart is central to his platform, which can be summarized in three words: "Us and Them." And, contra the hammer-and-sickle lady, Bernie is pretty emphatic that he is not one of the hated Them.

And this is where the Bernieverse is really off-kilter, where the intellectual shallowness of the man and his followers is as impossible to miss as a winter bonfire. The Scandinavian welfare states they so admire are very different from the United States in many ways, and one of the most important is that their politics are consensus-driven. That has some significant downsides, prominent among them the crushing conformity that is ruthlessly enforced on practically every aspect of life. (The Dano-Norwegian novelist Aksel Sandemose called it "Jante law," after the petty and bullying social milieu of the fictional village Jante in *A Fugitive Crosses His Tracks*.) But it is also a stabilizing and moderating force in politics, allowing for the emergence of a subtle and sophisticated and remarkably broad social agreement that contains political disputes. Bernie's politics, on the other hand, are the polar opposite of Scandinavian: He promises not just confrontation but hostile, theatrical confrontation, demonizing not only his actual opponents but his perceived enemies as well, including the Walton family, whose members are not particularly active in politics these days, and some of whom are notably liberal. That doesn't matter: If they have a great deal of wealth, they are the enemy. (What about Tom Steyer and George Soros? "False equivalency," Bernie scoffs.) He knows who Them is: The Koch brothers, who make repeated appearances in every speech; scheming foreigners who are stealing our jobs; bankers, the traditional bogeymen of conspiracy theorists ranging from Father Coughlin and Henry Ford to Louis Farrakhan; Wall Street; etc.

He is steeped in this stuff, having begun his political career with the radical Liberty Union party in the 1970s. Liberty Union sometimes ran its own candidates but generally endorsed candidates from other parties, most often the Socialist Party USA, making a few exceptions: twice for Lenora Fulani's New Alliance party and once for the Workers World party, a Communist party that split with Henry Wallace's Progressives over its view of Mao Zedong's murderous rule and the Soviet Union's invasion of Hungary—both of which it supported. The radical political

language of the 1970s and 1980s spoke of a capitalist conspiracy or a conspiracy of bankers (a conspiracy of Jewish bankers, in the ugliest versions), a notion to which Sanders pays ongoing tribute with the phrase "rigged economy."

His pose is not the traditional progressive managerial-empiricist posture but a moral one. He is very fond of the word "moral"—"moral imperative," "moral disaster," "moral crisis"—and those who see the world differently are not, in his estimate, guilty of misunderstanding, or ignorance, or bad judgment: They are guilty of "crimes."

And criminalizing things is very much on Bernie's agenda, beginning with the criminalization of political dissent. At every event he swears to introduce a constitutional amendment reversing Supreme Court decisions that affirmed the free-speech protections of people and organizations filming documentaries, organizing Web campaigns, and airing television commercials in the hopes of influencing elections or public attitudes toward public issues. That this would amount to a repeal of the First Amendment does not trouble Bernie at all. If the First Amendment enables Them, then the First Amendment has got to go.

F. A. Hayek's *Road to Serfdom* notwithstanding, corralling off foreign-made cars does not lead inevitably to corralling off foreign-born people, or members of ethnic minorities, although the Asians-and-Latinos-with-their-filthy-cheap-goods rhetoric in and around the Bernieverse is troubling. There are many kinds of Us-and-Them politics, and Bernie Sanders, to be sure, is not a national socialist in the mode of Alfred Rosenberg or Julius Streicher.

He is a national socialist in the mode of Hugo Chávez. He isn't driven by racial hatred; he's driven by political hatred. And that's bad enough.

"This is not about me," Bernie is fond of saying. Instead, he insists, it's about building a grassroots movement that will be in a permanent state of "political revolution"—his words—against the people he identifies as class enemies: Kochs, Waltons, Republicans, bankers, Wall Street, Them—the numerically inferior Them. His views are totalitarian inasmuch as there is no aspect of life that he believes to be beyond the reach of the state, and they are deeply illiberal inasmuch as he is willing to jettison a great deal of American liberalism—including freedom of speech—if doing so means that he can stifle his enemies' ability to participate in the political process. He rejects John F. Kennedy's insistence that "a rising tide lifts all boats"—and he is willing to sink as many boats as is necessary in his crusade against the reality that some people make more money than others.

Part of this is just a parting sentimental gesture from a daft old man (Occupy Geritol!)—soupy feel-good identity politics for aging McGovernites and dopey youngsters in Grateful Dead T-shirts. That an outlier of a senator from Vermont wants to organize American politics as a permanent domestic war on unpopular minorities is, while distasteful, probably not that important.

That Hillary Rodham Clinton made the same speech in Des Moines a day later, on the other hand, is significant, and terrifying.

March 15, 2019

Weirdo O'Rourke

By Kyle Smith

Friends of the young Bill Clinton and Barack Obama spoke of the special glow of promise they had about them, even back in their early twenties. Angels sat on their shoulders. History gave them a wink and said, "Hey, good lookin', I'll be back to pick you up later."

Robert O'Rourke? Not so much. He was just a weirdo. That isn't my word, it's how his friends saw him. "You're supposed to make friends with future secretaries of state, not weirdo musicians," one O'Rourke pal, Adam Mortimer, told the *New York Times*. "It's like, wait, one of the weirdo musicians might run for president." One contemporaneous photo accompanying the *Times* story about O'Rourke in his New York City years (four at Columbia University, three reenacting *Reality Bites* afterwards) shows him with what appears to be a food stain on his crotch, sitting between his girlfriend and a dog who is obviously possessed by Satan. The other picture has O'Rourke wearing a moustache and a ladies' floral dress.

The former El Paso congressman's spastic "Hey, I'm still figuring out these new hands" presidential-kickoff video, in which his upper limbs appeared to be subject to mad random yanks by an angry puppeteer, was merely the latest odd detail in the saga of Weirdo O'Rourke. It was even weirder than Elizabeth Warren's "Greetings fellow earthlings, I too enjoy fermented malt beverages!" video. Robert/Beto is a man so apart from other human beings that he recently thought nothing of ditching his wife and three kids so he could drive around the country, alone, accosting unsuspecting dentists to help him apply Novocaine to his aching soul. He might be the first person ever to run for the White House on a platform of asking the nation to help him figure out who he is.

The source of the angst is evident: Beto is a brainless rich kid who yearned to be cool and wasn't very good at it. He flunked out of punk. He failed as a fiction writer. He belly-flopped as an alternative-newspaper publisher. And he's so clueless that his apartment was once robbed while he was sitting in it. At his pricey Virginia prep school (Woodberry Forest School these days carries a sticker price of $48,000 a year), he thought he "just stuck out so badly" because of the "monoculture" there, which the *Dallas Morning News* called "white, wealthy and southern." O'Rourke was and is white, wealthy, and southern, so he couldn't have stuck out much more than Miracle Whip at the mayonnaise convention, yet he was wounded and alienated. Or maybe not. He put this in his high school yearbook: "I'm the angry son. I'm the angry son." Below that: "I owe you everything, Mom, Dad . . ." You have to pick one, though, don't you? You can't be a seething rebel and a dutiful child. You can't be Kurt Cobain and Kenny G. One pose nullifies the other. Or maybe O'Rourke was even then trying to position himself as acceptable to all constituencies.

But I don't think so. I think Robert (as he called himself at boarding school, having shed his childhood nickname because he wanted to fit in) didn't even spot the contradiction. Hey, you're not a phony if you genuinely don't know who you are. O'Rourke is a guy who was trying to make it as a punk rocker *at the same time he was working as a nanny*. Leonard Zelig wasn't a phony, he just had this involuntary nervous reaction that turned him fat when he was next to a fat guy or Chinese when he was next to a Chinese guy. Zelig was . . . weird.

O'Rourke did do a normal Texas thing when he started an IT business at the turn of the century, but that didn't go anywhere. When sold two years ago, it was still worth less than $500,000. So what's the deal with his net worth, which is estimated at $9 million? I came across this line, on Heavy.com: "Peppertree Square Ltd. Imperial Arms is a real estate company, and Peppertree Square is a shopping center in El Paso, which was a gift from his mother." Jeez, I remember when I thought my mom was sweet for buying me a blazer. I want Beto's mom. When Beto's dad died, he left the boy an apartment complex worth $5 million. Also his father-in-law William D. Sanders is worth a packet. Bloomberg once estimated he was worth $20 billion.

So far, then, O'Rourke's life story does not look like a fable about rising to meet fate's challenge, but more like privilege and dilettantism. For years Beto tumbled down the cultural mountain—from rocker to fiction writer to newspaper proprietor to IT guy—until he hit bottom, which is the El Paso City Council. I wonder how many other Ivy League graduates who inherited shopping centers and apartment complexes were willing to serve a stretch there. Yet O'Rourke's yearning for cool was at last being slaked, because he had managed to find the one profession in which he was hipper than most, in which managing to stay on a skateboard for ten seconds makes you Elvis. In that magical season of running against Ted Cruz, Beto, at last, was being called "a rock star." The very thing he wanted to be in the first place!

As of this week O'Rourke is aiming to be the first president (since Abraham Lincoln anyway) whose previous career highlight is losing a Senate race. Aren't you supposed to have at least one thing to brag about before you seek the Oval? Somehow O'Rourke became a folk hero based on . . . being more relatable than Ted Cruz. How much of an accomplishment is that? Adlai Stevenson is more relatable than Ted Cruz. And I don't mean 1952 Adlai. I mean today's Adlai, the guy who's been dead for 54 years. Ted Cruz could lose a charm contest to Martin Shkreli.

Up against Cruz, Beto said some odd things, like his defense of NFL players kneeling for the National Anthem. Sure, those overpaid jerks have every right to diss the flag, unclog their noses at it, stick their thumbs in their ears and go "La, la, la, I'm not listening to this crapola." But O'Rourke's take was, "I can think of nothing more American." Hang on, that's the most American thing he can think of? How hard is he actually thinking? Just off the top of my head, I can think of two things that are more American than insulting the flag: parachuting in behind the hedgerows with the 82nd Airborne on D-Day, and tailgating off the bed of a Ford F-150 at the Daytona 500 with 50 pounds of Chick-fil-A and "Gimee Three Steps" blasting on the stereo. Oh, and I just thought of a third thing: saluting the flag. It has to be a tad more American to show respect for the primary symbol of America than to react with the kind of revulsion you might evince if you happened to be one of the guys *defending* Normandy from the 82nd Airborne on D-Day.

Then again, O'Rourke is the guy who says, "We're safe not because of walls but in spite of walls." In spite of! So walls aren't just overrated—like America!—but actually decrease safety? They bring us danger? Maybe that's why young O'Rourke tried to sneak under that fence at the University of Texas at El Paso physical plant. If he hadn't been busted for burglary, he could have thrown open the gates and made the plant safer. The world's most sensitive locations are being endangered by all those walls and fences. We need President Beto to fix that. Besides, electing him president would really help him with his lonely quest to discover himself.

DESSERTS

'Things-You-Probably-Didn't-Know About' Certain Presidential Hopefuls

March 22, 2019

Twenty Things You Probably Didn't Know About Pete Buttigieg

By Jim Geraghty

One: South Bend mayor Pete Buttigieg's father, Joseph Buttigieg, immigrated to the United States from Malta and was naturalized as a U.S. citizen in 1979. He was a professor of European literature who taught at New Mexico State and then Notre Dame. The elder Buttigieg was a fan of Manchester United soccer and easily transitioned to become a fan of Notre Dame football. Buttigieg's mother, Anne Montgomery Buttigieg, was also a professor at Notre Dame for nearly three decades. Joseph Buttigieg passed away in January. Mayor Buttigieg now lives on the same block as his mother and says his mortgage payment on a "large old house facing the river" is $450.

Two: Buttigieg is the youngest candidate in the large Democratic field, born in 1982. He was a child or young man for events that might seem "not that long ago" to many older voters. He remembers an elementary-school teacher explaining that the maps and globes with the label "Soviet Union" were now obsolete. He was ten when Bill Clinton was elected president, a college freshman when George W. Bush was elected president, and a sophomore on 9/11. One of his first jobs out of college was doing research and press work for John Kerry's presidential campaign; he turned down an offer to work for Barack Obama's Senate campaign.

Three: In high school, Buttigieg was senior-class president, valedictorian, and president of the school's chapter of Amnesty International. In his autobiography, *Shortest Way Home*, he describes his high-school gym teacher as objecting to the group's focus on "Ay-rabs." He won an essay contest sponsored by the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library as part of the organization's annual Profile in Courage Award. Buttigieg wrote an essay saluting the courage of then-congressman Bernie Sanders, declaring that the congressman's "real impact has been a reaction to the cynical climate which threatens the effectiveness of the democratic system." Invited to the JFK library, Buttigieg met Senator Ted Kennedy, and the senator offered him an internship.

His thoughts of running for office started quite early. In *Shortest Way Home*, Buttigieg writes of his high-school years, "I had begun to wonder what it would be like to be involved in public service directly, instead of reading or watching movies about it. Could political action be a calling, not just the stuff of dinner table talk?"

Four: Buttigieg was accepted to Harvard University and found that his dorm room had previously housed Ulysses Grant Jr., Cornel West, and Horatio Alger. He describes college life in his autobiography like something out of the X-Men: "It began to feel like the academy of X-Men: everyone had some concealed special power: Cate, on the second floor, could read books at four or five times the normal pace. Andrew, on the ground floor, could do a Rubik's Cube from any

starting point in about a minute. Steve, my roommate, was like a science-fiction telepath; he could dissect social interactions and predict with remarkable accuracy how relationships among other freshmen we knew would play out with time."

Five: Buttigieg became the student president at Harvard's Institute of Politics, a role described by *The New Yorker* as being "sought by the most ambitious of the exceptionally ambitious." At the time the institute was headed by retired senator David Pryor—who is credited with being one of Bill Clinton's key political mentors. Buttigieg thanks Pryor for providing "the political education we really needed."

He was a board member of the Harvard College Democrats and protested the war in Iraq. He wrote a regular column for the *Harvard Crimson*, and in one mocked George W. Bush for his Ivy League elitism in poetry form:

The Blue Blood's in me through and through
And not just 'cause of Yale;
It's Kennebunkport, Harvard—
Andover, now there's my tale . . .
Well, think again, since now you know
The shade of my true colors;
You know that I ignore the Tenets,
Powells and even Muellers.
Instead I heed the dicta of
The most extremist Right.
I kept them quiet in the race
But now I fight their fight.

In another column, Buttigieg raved about rap star Eminem for articulating the cultural zeitgeist: "The anthem of our new life came on an arresting new album from Eminem. Tossing expletives at Dick Cheney and Tipper Gore, Eminem was, as he put it, 'dumping it on White America,' building a new narrative—aggressively American, abused, angry and alarming. He warned young Americans to think about a draft, joked about Dick Cheney's cardiac health, and lashed out at the 'Divided States of Embarrassment' for abandoning free speech. The national rhetoric of redemption began to ring hollow as this spokesperson of the Midwestern underclass resonated all the way to Harvard."

Six: A Rhodes Scholarship took Buttigieg to Oxford, where he describes his education in economics: "One calculus equation at a time, I came to understand in thorough mathematical detail why supply and demand cannot be expected to deliver fair prices or efficient outcomes in many situations. Indeed, even the most orthodox economic theories showed that market failures were all but guaranteed to occur in situations, like health care and education delivery, where a seller has power over a buyer, or a buyer is seeking a service that can't easily be assigned a dollar value, or the seller and buyer have different levels of information about the product." Buttigieg finished with a "First," the highest grade possible.

After Oxford, Buttigieg went to work for McKinsey & Company in Chicago, writing, "despite all my education, I felt ignorant about how the private sector really worked." This was 2007.

Seven: In 2010, at age 27, Buttigieg ran for state treasurer, which he says "paid less than half of what I'd already been making." (In 2010, the Indiana state treasurer was paid $68,772 per year.) Buttigieg writes, "No one was pleading with a twenty-seven-year old management consultant to run for statewide office as a Democrat. I just started to think about it and felt like it could make sense."

Eight: Buttigieg was an outspoken supporter of the auto-industry bailout in 2009 and 2010. Summarizing the decision today, he claims, "with remarkable speed, the government had recovered most of the taxpayer money that had gone into the deal." The accuracy of that statement depends upon how you define "most." When the government sold off the last of its shares of stock in the automakers, it had recovered about $70 billion, losing about $10 billion in the process. It is worth noting that while the bailout was being debated, General Motors was manufacturing millions of cars with a dangerous defect in the ignition switch, causing the cars to suddenly stop if the driver's key chain was too heavy and hiding reports of the defect from federal safety inspectors. The defect led to 124 deaths and the recall of 5 million cars. In 2014, GM recalled nearly 14 million cars for safety reasons.

Writing of Indiana treasurer Richard Mourdock's decision to file a lawsuit challenging the legality of the bailout, Buttigieg writes, "gripped by ideology, Mourdock simply could not accept that government getting involved could be a good thing, even if it prevented the destruction of thousands of lives." Mourdock won his bid for reelection against Buttigieg, 62.5 percent to 37.5 percent.

Nine: After his defeat, Buttigieg contemplated his next move and started talking about running for mayor, discussing the matter with South Bend residents and retired Democratic officials. Four weeks after Buttigieg's defeat in the state-treasurer race, incumbent mayor Stephen Luecke surprised the city by announcing he would not run for a fourth term.

Ten: This list from 2017 ranks South Bend the 299th-largest city in the United States, just behind Wichita Falls, Texas; Rialto, Calif.; and Davenport, Iowa.

Eleven: When Adam Nagourney of the *New York Times* reviewed Buttigeig's autobiography, he wrote, "If the underlying point of this book is to draw attention to himself as a future Democratic leader for a party aching for one, then his thumping re-election as mayor in a state Trump captured with 56 percent is quite a selling card." Except the politics of South Bend and Indiana as a whole are quite different.

Despite the presence of Notre Dame and the perception of Indiana's overall conservatism, South Bend has been heavily Democratic for a long time. Every South Bend mayor since 1972 has been a Democrat. All of the members of the Indiana General Assembly currently representing South Bend are Democrats. The city's congressional district leans more Republican, but St. Joseph's County, which includes South Bend, is the lone Democratic-leaning county in the district;

the rest are more heavily Republican. Former Democratic senator Joe Donnelly used to represent the district.

Twelve: In the mayoral race, Buttigieg faced a state representative, a county councilman, and two lesser-known competitors; the local party deemed him too young and discouraged his interest in the race. Buttigieg saw his name as an advantage: "An unpronounceable, ethnically ambiguous name is practically an asset in northern Indiana politics. Depending upon their own background, people could assume it was Hungarian, Polish, Serbian, Czech, or Belgian—all of which carried their own tribal loyalties in the area." Buttigieg won a majority in the five-way race.

Thirteen: Three months into the job, Buttigieg ran into his first (and so far, most serious) controversy as mayor. He demoted police chief Darryl Boykins and fired police communications director Karen DePaepe after revelations that the department had illegally recorded various officers' phone calls. Boykins had allegedly confronted other officers with what they had said on the tapes, and the tapes reportedly include racist comments and discussions of officers breaking the law. The officers went to the FBI, claiming Boykin had illegally wiretapped them.

Buttigieg refused to release the tapes, contending that because they were illegally recorded, they are not subject to public-records laws; under the Federal Wiretap Act, releasing illegally recorded information is a felony. Some African Americans contended this decision amounted to protecting the officers who made the racist remarks and who had allegedly discussed breaking the law in the course of their duties. The South Bend city council subpoenaed the tapes and any Buttigieg documents relating to the decision on Boykins and DePaepe.

The legal fight that followed was the longest-running and most expensive in city history, with more than $2 million in taxpayer money spent on lawyers and significant settlements: "The city government paid four officers said to be on the tapes $500,000 after they sued. The city also settled with the former police chief and communications director over their firings, for $75,000 and $230,000, respectively." The legal fight over whether the tapes should be releasing or destroyed is still ongoing.

Fourteen: Buttigieg's record on controlling crime as mayor is mixed. In 2015, South Bend had a murder rate of 16.79 per 100,000 people, ranking it the 29th-worst among the 300 American cities with 100,000 people or more. Buttigieg implemented a version of the "Operation Ceasefire" program touted by David Kennedy.

"Shootings began to rise again in 2016 and 2017, but data from the program suggested it might have been higher otherwise," Buttigieg writes in *Shortest Way Home*. "And the whole thing would have been worth it just to get the relationships built among the working group that still meets quarterly to oversee the strategy's implementation."

Fifteen: Two years into his first term, the *Washington Post* labeled Buttigieg "the most interesting mayor you've never heard of." The profile's news hook was Buttigieg's impending six-month deployment to Afghanistan as a naval reservist, and it touted South Bend's new 311 city information line and its plan to deal with 1,000 vacant lots and abandoned buildings in 1,000 days.

Buttigieg declared local government to be the next frontier of youthful energy and cutting-edge innovation: "In the 60s, you would go to NASA, in the 90s you would go to Silicon Valley, now these people are interested in working in local government."

Buttigieg's former chief of staff and campaign manager was Mike Schmuhl, who had previously worked at the *Washington Post*'s public relations department.

Sixteen: By 2016, *New York Times* columnist Frank Bruni wrote a column entitled "The First Gay President?" and praised Buttigieg in tones that made the coverage of Beto O'Rourke look restrained and even-handed, beginning, "if you went into some laboratory to concoct a perfect Democratic candidate, you'd be hard pressed to improve on Pete Buttigieg, the 34-year-old second-term mayor of this Rust Belt city, where he grew up and now lives just two blocks from his parents."

Bruni wrote that Buttigieg "seems always to say just the right thing, in just the right tone" and that "the daunting scope of his distinctions may be his greatest liability."

Seventeen: After Trump's election, Buttigieg announced he would run for chairman of the Democratic National Committee, urging his party to not "relitigate old battles" such as the split between the factions that preferred Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders. (Buttigieg endorsed Clinton late in the primary.) The day before the DNC vote, Buttigieg withdrew from the campaign, declaring he had not accumulated enough support to be competitive.

Eighteen: Buttigieg told *The New Yorker* that one of his big themes for his campaign will be "intergenerational justice," which he emphasizes shouldn't being about "generational conflict." His proposals include abolishing the Electoral College and instituting single-payer health care. He said he's open to statehood for the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico and appointing more than nine justices to the Supreme Court because "in some ways it's no more a shattering of norms than what's already been done to get the judiciary to where it is today."

Nineteen: In the same interview, Buttigieg said he sees his youth and post–Cold War worldview as a strength, primarily a willingness to examine options for the role of government unthinkable to previous generations: "It is very pragmatic to look around and say, well, the countries that do this tend to be better than the countries that don't. The system we have isn't working very well; we ought to try this other system. Politically, it's never been possible, because it's been considered socialism, and socialism was a kill switch. Our generation did not live through the Cold War in the same way."

Twenty: Discussing his experience campaigning statewide and attending many county Democratic parties' traditional Jefferson-Jackson dinners, he laments that the events are named after "two morally problematic men," former presidents Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson.

January 8, 2019

Fifteen Things You Probably Didn't Know about Elizabeth Warren

By Jim Geraghty

One: In 1966, Elizabeth Warren won the Betty Crocker Homemaker of Tomorrow scholarship at her high school. "Contestants were required to take a 50-minute exam," according to a short history published in 2013. "The test, consisting of 150 questions, covered a variety of topics: family relationships, spiritual and moral values, child development and care, health and safety, utilization and conservation, money management, recreation and use of leisure time, home care and beautification, community participation, and continuing education."

Two: One of Warren's big breaks was an appearance on Dr. Phil McGraw's daytime television show in 2004. The previous year, then Harvard Law School professor Warren and her daughter, financial consultant Amelia Warren Tyagi, had co-written a book entitled "The Two-Income Trap: Why Middle-Class Parents Are Going Broke." McGraw had Warren on to give advice to couples with major debt problems. She appeared twice more and in the following years made more appearances in related documentaries and programming on mortgage costs, the housing bubble, and the economic crisis.

Three: For a long while, Lou Dobbs was a fan of Warren's. He approvingly quoted her in his 2004 book, *War on the Middle Class: How the Government, Big Business, and Special Interests Are Waging War on the American Dream and How to Fight Back.*

Back in 2006, the National Association of Manufacturers fumed about Dobbs's show, lamenting: "He opened with author and fellow Harvard-ite Elizabeth Warren, whose grim assessments of the state of the middle class were quoted favorably by the similarly dour Presidential candidate John Kerry. She says it's tough to make ends meet (although presumably not on a Harvard professor's salary), seemingly ignoring the fact that folks consume much more in food, housing, cars and general electronics and goodies than they ever did before."

In November 2008, when Dobbs was with CNN and Warren was heading the congressional panel that provided oversight of the bailout of the U.S. financial system, Dobbs closed an interview with her by declaring, "I hope that a lot of those folks in Congress and in the Senate hear your voice, Professor Elizabeth Warren. They couldn't have chosen a By 2018, Dobbs, now with Fox Business Channel, had a very different opinion of Warren, asking his followers on Twitter whether her atrocious handling of questions about her claims of Native American ancestry was evidence that she was "a secret operative for the Republicans."

By 2018, Dobbs, now with Fox Business Channel, had a very different opinion of Warren, asking his followers on Twitter whether her atrocious handling of questions about her claims of Native American ancestry was evidence that she was "a secret operative for the Republicans."

Four: In his autobiography *Stress Test*, President Obama's first treasury secretary, Tim Geithner, portrays Warren as an empty suit, full of criticism but short on serious alternative proposals. Her "oversight hearings often felt more like made-for-YouTube inquisitions than serious inquiries," he writes. "She was worried about the right things but she was better at impugning our choices—as well as our intentions and our competence—than identifying any feasible alternatives."

Geithner describes a meeting with Warren in which he said, "At some point, you should tell me what you propose we do," and she admitted she hadn't really thought about what specifically should change in the administration's approach.

Of course, other Obama-administration officials have contended that Geithner "hated her," for both personal and ideological reasons.

Five: Former Connecticut senator Christopher Dodd, a fellow Democrat with close ties to the banking industry and Wall Street, publicly expressed irritation with Warren. Dodd co-authored Dodd-Frank, which created the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, since known as Warren's brainchild. In 2011, as the Obama administration's internal fight over the first CFPB director became public, Dodd issued a statement denying that he was lobbying against Warren for the job but hinting at behind-the-scenes frustration with her role in the impasse: "I believe it would be deeply unfortunate if the head of this agency is not filled because of ego, because of people who believe they are so important that their value exceeds the idea. It would essentially enable the opponents to kill the bill."

Six: Warren was a registered Republican from 1991 to 1996, when she taught at the University of Pennsylvania Law School before eventually making the move to Harvard.

"I was a Republican because I thought that those were the people who best supported markets. I think that is not true anymore," Warren told *The Daily Beast* in 2011. "I was a Republican at a time when I felt like there was a problem that the markets were under a lot more strain. It worried me whether or not the government played too activist a role." In that interview, she refused to say whether she had voted for Ronald Reagan.

Seven: Warren was, at one point, a passionate advocate for school-voucher programs. *The Two-Income Trap*, the 2003 book she co-authored with her daughter, had this to say on the subject:

> Any policy that loosens the ironclad relationship between location-location-location and school-school-school would eliminate the need for parents to pay an inflated price for a home just because it happens to lie within the boundaries of a desirable school district.
>
> A well-designed voucher program would fit the bill neatly. A taxpayer-funded voucher that paid the entire cost of educating a child (not just a partial subsidy) would open a range of opportunities to all children. With fully funded vouchers, parents of all income levels could send their children—and the accompanying

> financial support—to the schools of their choice. Middle-class parents who used state funds to send their kids to school would be able to live in the neighborhood of their choice—or the neighborhood of their pocketbook. Fully funded vouchers would relieve parents from the terrible choice of leaving their kids in lousy schools or bankrupting themselves to escape those schools.

As she joined the Democratic party and became increasingly prominent in it, Warren's position changed. By 2018, she was denouncing Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos for "using her vast fortune to bankroll radical K–12 'school choice' policies and private voucher programs," and she decried voucher programs as an effort to "further drain funds from public education and programs serving low-income and working Americans."

Eight: Elsewhere in *The Two-Income Trap*, Warren and her daughter argued that the problem of divorced "deadbeat dads" failing to pay child support had been vastly overstated:

> So how can a single-parent family get out of the trap? We begin with the solution put forth by nearly every politician, women's group, and angry mother: Make Dad pay more. . . .
>
> It doesn't come through in most news reports, but the overwhelming majority of middle-class fathers today are like Brad Pritchard. They pay the support they owe. According to one survey, nonresident fathers who earned more than $30,000 a year reported that they were paying more than 95 percent of their court-ordered child support. This statistic may be somewhat distorted by men who overestimate their own payments. But another survey of single mothers found similar results. . . .
>
> What about the dads who don't pay? About two-thirds of these men do not pay because they are not legally required to pay; they have not had paternity established, or they are separated but not divorced.

At the heart of the book was a contention that women entering the workforce created increased competition for homes in good neighborhoods and other aspects of middle-class life, increasing demand much faster than supply and raising prices. This amounted to a mild criticism of feminists who celebrated women entering the workforce:

> When millions of mothers entered the workforce, they ratcheted up the price of a middle-class life for everyone, including families who wanted to keep Mom at home. . . . Both sides of the political spectrum miscalculated the financial value of the stay-at-home mother. Feminists assumed that women's entry in the workforce entailed no real costs—only benefits. Conservatives, for their part, slavishly touted the emotional benefits that a stay-at-home mother provides to her children and fretted over "who will rock the cradle" when mothers abandon their homes. . . . No one saw the stay-at-home mom as the family's safety net.

Nine: Relatedly, the book expressed mixed feelings about government-funded day care:

> How much help would subsidized day care really offer to middle-class families? It would certainly be a big help for poorer families, whose paychecks can barely cover

> even low-quality child care. But what about the average two-parent middle-class family? Government-sponsored day care would ease the immediate cost pressures on some families, but the long-term financial implications are more complex. Unlike the money that the government spends on public safety or education, which benefit every child, subsidized day care benefits only some kids—those whose parents both work outside the home. Day-care subsidies offer no help for families with a stay-at-home mother. In fact, such subsidies would make financial life more difficult for these families, because they would create yet another comparative disadvantage for single-income families trying to compete in the marketplace. Every dollar spent to subsidize the price of day care frees up a dollar for the two-income family to spend in the bidding wars for housing, tuition, and everything else that families are competing for—widening the gap between single- and dual-income families. Any subsidy that benefits working parents without providing a similar benefit to single-income families pushes the stay-at-home mother and her family further down the economic ladder.

By the time the book was reissued in 2016, Warren was declaring in a new introduction that the country needs to "create universal preschool and affordable child care."

Ten: Some other analysts argued that Warren's analysis had seriously understated the effect of the changing tax code and higher taxes on family finances, and that the book amounted to demonizing the rising costs of real estate, banking, and automobiles to avoid discussing the increasing tax burden on middle-class families.

Here's law professor Todd Zywicki, back in 2007:

> In fact, for the typical 1970s family, paying 24% of its income in taxes works out to be $9,288. And for the 2000s family, paying 33% of its income is $22,374.
>
> Although income only rose 75%, and expenditures for the mortgage, car and health insurance rose by even less than that, the tax bill increased by $13,086—a whopping 140% increase. The percentage of family income dedicated to health insurance, mortgage, and automobiles actually declined between the two periods.
>
> During this period, the figures used by Ms. Warren and Ms. Tyagi indicate that annual mortgage obligations increased by $3,690, automobile obligations by $2,860, and health insurance payments by $620 (a total increase of $7,170). Those increases are not trivial—but they are swamped by the increase in tax obligations. To put this in perspective, the increase in tax obligations is over three times as large as the increase in the mortgage payments and almost double the increase in the mortgage and automobile payments combined. Even the new expenditure on child care is about a quarter less than the increase in taxes.
>
> Overall, the typical family in the 2000s pays substantially more in taxes than the combined expenses of their mortgage, automobile, and health insurance. And the change in the tax obligation between the two periods is substantially greater than

> the change in mortgage, automobile expenses, and health-insurance costs combined.

Eleven: In a 2004 interview with Bill Moyers, Warren told a story that portrayed Hillary Clinton as a shameless sellout to the banking industry:

> That bankruptcy bill that was passed by the House and the Senate in 2000 and [Bill Clinton] vetoed it. And in her autobiography, Mrs. Clinton took credit for that veto, and she rightly should. She turned around a whole administration on the subject of bankruptcy. . . . One of the first bills that came up after she was Senator Clinton was the bankruptcy bill. This is a bill that's like a vampire that will not die. There's a lot of money behind it. Her husband had vetoed it, very much at her urging . . . and she voted in favor of it.
>
> As *Senator* Clinton, the pressures are very different. It's a well-financed industry. A lot of people don't realize that the industry that gave the most money to Washington over the past few years was not the oil industry, was not pharmaceuticals, it was consumer-credit products. She has taken money from the groups and more to the point, she worries about them as a constituency.

Twelve: As a lawyer, Warren represented a few companies that would later generate headaches for her Senate campaign.

In 1995, Warren "wrote a Supreme Court petition on behalf of a steel company, which was attempting to avoid paying into a fund that gave health benefits to retired coal miners." She later argued that the retirees' health benefits were never at risk, and the case was about what stage of bankruptcy had to be complete before the company had to pay.

From 2008 to 2010, she was paid $212,000 by Travelers Insurance as an expert witness in an effort to preserve a $500 million trust for asbestos victims in exchange for permanent immunity from lawsuits. Her lone appearance before the U.S. Supreme Court came in this case. She argued that the trust should stay in place; she won, but the Court left the door open for other companies to sue Travelers. An Appeals Court subsequently ruled that another company could still sue Travelers, and then another judge ruled that because Travelers was still getting sued, the conditions had not been met to force Travelers to pay out the money, delaying the payouts again.

Thirteen: Zywicki accused Warren of using "shoddy data" and claimed that her research involved fudging statistics to exaggerate the scale of the trends she decried.

At the height of the Obamacare fight, Warren warned of an explosion in "medical bankruptcies"—people who were financially ruined by runaway medical bills. Zywicki noted that the studies she cited to back this claim:

> provided an implausibly broad definition of 'medical bankruptcy'—including any filer who reported uncontrolled gambling, drug or alcohol addiction, or the birth or adoption of a child. . . .

> Equally dubious, the authors classified a bankruptcy as having a "major medical cause" if the individual had accumulated more than $1,000 in out-of-pocket medical expenses (uncovered by insurance) over the course of two years prior to filing—regardless of income, and even if the debtor did not cite illness or injury among the reasons for bankruptcy. This is a completely different and much narrower definition of "medical bankruptcy" than the one she used 20 years later, and obviously inflates the increase.

Fourteen: When discussing international trade deals, Warren can sound . . . an awful lot like the president, so much so that Daniel W. Drezner, a professor of international politics at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, has called her politics "Trumpism with a human face."

> Here she is in her big foreign-policy address from November:
>
> While international economic policies and trade deals have worked gloriously well for elites around the world, they have left working people discouraged and disaffected. . . .
>
> The trade deals they negotiated mainly lifted the boats of the wealthy while leaving millions of working Americans to drown. Policymakers were willing to sacrifice American jobs in hopes of lowering prices for consumer goods at home and spreading open markets abroad. . . .
>
> Multinational corporations exploited their enormous influence on both sides of the negotiating table to ensure that the terms of trade between nations always favored their own bottom lines. Time after time, American workers got the short end of the stick.

Fifteen: In her books, Warren has denounced "flipping houses" as a high-risk form of investment in which rich speculators often profit at the expense of the little guy. But going back to the 1990s, Warren and her husband bought at least five homes in her native Oklahoma, two of them in foreclosure, and then resold them, anywhere from five months to several years later. A 2015 NRO investigative report by Jillian Kay Melchior and Eliana Johnson found that Warren and her husband sold one of the homes for nearly four times its purchase price, and they concluded that the couple made at least $240,500 from their real-estate speculation, not counting the unknown sum they invested in remodeling.

February 7, 2019

Twenty Things You Probably Didn't Know about Cory Booker

By Jim Geraghty

One: Henry Louis Gates tested Senator Booker's DNA for an episode of his ancestry-research program *Finding Your Roots* and found that Booker's ancestry was 47 percent African, 45 percent European, and 7 percent Native American. (Yes, this means Booker has significantly more Native American ancestry than fellow senator Elizabeth Warren.) As Booker wrote in his 2016 book, *United*, "I am descended from slaves and slave owners. I have Native American blood and am also the great-great-great grandson of a white man who fought in the Creek War of 1836, in which Native Americans were forcibly removed from their land. I am the great-great-grandson of many slaves, and I am also the great-great-grandson of a corporal who fought in the Confederate Army and was captured by Union troops."

Two: If elected president, Booker would be the best football player in the Oval Office since Gerald Ford. In fact, former president Ford called to urge Booker to play for his alma mater, the University of Michigan, when the future senator was in high school.

A *New York Times* report from 1985 noted that Old Tappan beat Wayne Valley, 7-0 in the North Jersey Section 1 Group 3 High School Football Final, helped by "a 38-yard pass to Cory Booker [that] fueled the 55-yard, six-play drive." Booker was 16 years old at the time. He eventually chose to ignore President Ford's pleas and attend Stanford University.

At Stanford, Booker spent his first two years on the bench. In his junior and senior years, he had 20 catches for 199 yards and a touchdown. On October 6, 1990, he caught four passes for 47 yards as Stanford upset then-top-ranked Notre Dame 36–31. But though he was eligible to play for another year as a fifth-year senior, the coaching staff chose to not bring him back, an experience he called "a gut punch." He instead applied for and won a Rhodes scholarship, studying in Oxford for a year before moving on to Yale Law School.

Three: Booker's first run for public office came in 1998, when he sought a seat on the Newark City Council, challenging an entrenched incumbent Democrat in a vicious race that he later recalled during a speech:

> I ran for office in an environment that was so hostile. I had windows on my cars smashed, I had threats to my person, there was literature spread about me throughout the city that I was a tool of the Jews, that I was a CIA plant in the city, that I was a KKK member—all wonderful, creative things. My opponent literally would refer to me in debates, and I used to joke about this, as the fa**ot white boy running against him.

Four: In 2000, as a city councilman, Booker gave a speech at the pro-free-market Manhattan Institute that would thrill today's conservatives and shock today's Democrats. He denounced the Democratic elected leaders of Newark as failures who did not seem to care about their constituents. In one passage, he offered a vivid portrait of exploitation and dysfunction in the city's public housing:

> There [were] about three different slums controlled by some very nefarious individuals who pocketed many, many millions of dollars from federal programs and put little into the building. Even worse than that, I started to have a lot of aggression and animosity toward the city because it was doing nothing about one of the boldest drug trades I had ever seen, and nothing about code violations that were so obvious that you could walk into people's homes and look at holes through their floors. No one seemed to be doing anything about it.
>
> It was in the midst of all this, of working with different residents, that I began to become very political. The government that I had heard was a force for good in so many ways I began to see in many ways as a force that, at best, tolerated such circumstances and, at worst, was complicit and active in them. So I began to get involved in the political process.

In another, he described a deeply corrupt philosophy of government that Democrats rarely ever acknowledge exists, with passages that would bring a CPAC crowd to its feet:

> I began to feel that the main theme of City Council life was really to do the following things: First, it was, by every means necessary, protect your turf. Second, resist change. Third, expand one's sphere of control, always hoping to control more and more resources and authority. Fourth, enlarge the number of subordinates underneath you because having subordinates means having power, having election workers, and keeping yourself in office. Next, protect programs and projects regardless of whether they are effective or not. Finally, maintain the ability to distribute the greatest amounts of wealth from taxpayers to people and organizations of your own choosing.
>
> We now have a system in government where people are more loyal to the bureaucracy than they are to the outcome. We must be loyal to outcomes first and bureaucracies and systems last. If you are outcomes-focused, you start to realize often that you don't need these controlling and all-consuming bureaucracies. . . .You empower citizens by asking more from them, not less. We need to start asking more from our citizens and start making our citizens more responsible and giving them more control and authority over their own lives.

Five: Booker ran for mayor of Newark in 2002 in another blisteringly tough race, this one against longtime incumbent Sharpe James, that became the subject of the documentary *Street Fight*. Booker would later tell *Esquire* that former New Jersey governor Jim McGreevey attempted to deter him from challenging James:

> "Before they came after me in 2002," he says, "they offered me every job imaginable. McGreevey"—that'd be disgraced former New Jersey governor and self-described "gay American" Jim McGreevey, a Sharpe James ally—"offered me Secretary of State, Secretary of Commerce, or Secretary of Labor. They said, 'The county bosses will give you the line for the Essex County Executive—you'll be the first black county executive'—all that kind of stuff."

During the campaign, Mayor James admitted that he had visited a strip club that police investigators said was home to a brothel where, allegedly, underage prostitutes worked. James claimed he had done so only in an official capacity to see that the club would be shut down. He narrowly won reelection against Booker.

Six: For most of his early career, Booker strongly endorsed school choice and vouchers. From the Manhattan Institute speech:

> I have always been, up until maybe four or five years ago, a strong advocate for the old-fashioned way of educating children. I supported public schools only. Even charter schools made me a little uncomfortable when I first heard about them. But after four or five years of working in inner-city Newark, I began to rethink my situation, rethink my philosophy, rethink my views on public education, simply because of the realities I saw around me. Being outcome-focused started to change my view in favor of options like charter schools, contract schools, and, yes, vouchers.

He added that "the implementation of vouchers is not a panacea. If it is used as a guise for disinvesting in education as a whole, then I will never be in favor of it. But I will support it if it is part of a larger system of education for our children."

Seven: As recently as 2016, Booker spoke to the American Federation for Children, a pro-school-choice group headed up by current Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos. Then, he bragged that Newark was ranked the fourth-most choice-friendly city in the country and declared to the organization, "There are some people in this room who really were the difference makers as I was climbing the ladder in Newark, N.J. with a vision for transforming that city."

In 2017, after President Trump nominated DeVos to run the Department of Education, Booker voted against her, saying that "there are a number of departures between Mrs. DeVos policy beliefs and mine that prevent me from supporting her." After Booker's dramatic about-face, one voucher advocate concluded, "It's pretty safe to say that, regardless of the outcome, tomorrow there won't be an ed reform 'left' as we know it anymore."

Eight: Before abandoning his support for the school-choice movement, Booker noted that Al Gore once admitted he would not send his children to D.C. public schools, and he echoed a common argument of choice advocates on the right: "These people would never ever send their children into public education, but they are going to tell my friends in the central ward of Newark that their children have to go there."

Nine: From 2007 to 2012, he made $689,500 from his old law firm in exchange for selling his share of the firm. During this time, the firm collected more than $2 million in fees from independent authorities, some of whose board members are appointed by the mayor.

Ten: Booker has always been a charismatic speaker. In 2013, while running for Senate, his campaign disclosed that he had been paid $1,327,190 for 96 speeches since 2008, for an average of a bit less than $14,000 per speech. (It is worth noting that during that time period, he gave $620,000 to charity.)

Eleven: In 2013, Booker created his own Internet start-up, Waywire, with investors that included LinkedIn CEO Jeff Weiner, former Google CEO Eric Schmidt, and Oprah Winfrey. Some questioned the ethics of the mayor of Newark raising money for an Internet start-up on the side. In September 2013, Booker announced that he would be stepping down from Waywire's board and donating his ownership interest in the company to charity. In a financial disclosure statement filed with the Senate, he estimated that his interest in the company was worth $1 million to $5 million.

Twelve: Booker brought a lot of new investment, energy, and optimism to Newark during his years as mayor, but almost all of his accomplishments in that office came with some less-discussed drawbacks. His record of increasing taxes tends to get glossed over. One of his first acts was an unprecedented 8.3 percent property-tax increase, and in 2010, he pushed through another 16 percent property-tax increase. He instituted a new tax on rental cars. And in 2013, the city reassessed property values shocking many Newark businesses that saw the assessed value of their property double or triple overnight. While raising taxes on ordinary citizens, Booker gave special deals to big companies willing to relocate to Newark: In 2011, he helped negotiate a deal giving Panasonic a $100 million tax credit for moving its headquarters into the city.

Thirteen: Severe budget shortfalls eventually drove Booker to cut the Newark police force by 15 percent. Crime initially declined, but bounced back up; by Booker's last full year in office, Newark had 95 homicides and 3,220 violent crimes, both slight increases from a decade earlier.

Fourteen: Back in 2007, Steve Malanga wrote in *City Journal* that Booker "made reducing crime his Number One priority and installed a zero-tolerance policing strategy engineered by a veteran of New York's drug wars." But once Booker was in the Senate, he lamented that the United States "imprisons more people than any other country on earth and spends about a quarter of a trillion dollars each year on a bloated, backward criminal-justice system." "Over the past 30 years, the federal prison population has grown by 800 percent, an increase largely due to overly punitive sentences for nonviolent, low-level drug crimes."

Fifteen: For many years, Booker was good friends with Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, whom he met at Oxford. Boteach and Booker are much less close now, having had a strong disagreement over Booker's vote in support of the Obama administration's Iran Deal.

Sixteen: As mayor, Booker found himself in dramatic situations that went viral on social media. During a 2010 snowstorm, city resident Barbara Byers wrote on Twitter that she was running out of diapers and snowed in. Booker showed up at her door with Pampers. In 2016, *Politico* caught

up with Byers and she noted that the coverage of Booker's personal delivery obscured the failures of the government he was running:

> Byers laughed at the memory and thinks everyone missed the point: Booker, she said, focused on the individual heroics because the larger task of managing city services eluded him.
>
> "The only reason he brought me Pampers was that it had been three days and our street hadn't been plowed," she said. "I have five kids and, trust me, I don't just run out of Pampers. All we wanted was for him to plow our streets. It's about knowing how to manage a city."

Seventeen: In 2013, in an interview with the editorial board of *The Record* of Bergen County, Booker told reporters that he "opposes raising the retirement age for most people in the country—except, perhaps, for people in their 20s or younger." Within a week, after outcry from liberal and progressive groups, Booker declared on Twitter that he did not support any cuts to Social Security or Medicare, and that, if anything, Social Security should be expanded.

Eighteen: When Donald Trump tweeted during the 2016 campaign, "If Cory Booker is the future of the Democratic Party, they have no future!" Booker turned the other cheek during a subsequent interview with CNN. "Let me tell you right now: I love Donald Trump. I don't want to answer his hate with hate. I'm going to answer it with love. I'm not going to answer his darkness with darkness," Booker said. "I love him. I know his kids, I know his family. They're good—the children especially—good people."

Nineteen: In 2017, Booker pushed back on the idea that Democrats lost in 2016 because they were too nice.

"I hear Democrats often say this, that 'Republicans are so mean. . . . We've got to stop being so nice,'" he said in an interview with *Politico*. "I'm like, 'That's 100 percent opposite to what we need to be.' We don't need to take on the tactics that we find unacceptable in the Republican party. That doesn't mean we don't need to fight hard and make sacrifices and struggle and battle—but we do not need to take on the dark arts."

Twenty: Booker was the first mayor of Newark in 45 years not to leave office indicted or under the threat of indictment on criminal charges.

January 23, 2019

Twenty Things You Probably Didn't Know about Amy Klobuchar

By Jim Geraghty

One: In 2002, Amy Klobuchar was Hennepin County attorney and pressed charges against legendary Minnesota Twins player Kirby Puckett. The prosecution charged Puckett with grabbing a woman and bringing her into a men's room and groping her; Puckett said he had merely escorted her into the men's room when the women's room had a long line. Klobuchar pursued charges of false imprisonment, fifth-degree criminal sexual conduct, and fifth-degree assault. After eight hours of deliberation, the jury acquitted Puckett on all charges.

After the verdict, Puckett's defense attorney, B. Todd Jones, contended that prosecutors had let his client's fame drive their decision to pursue charges. "When it comes down to it, they just did not have the courage to not charge Kirby Puckett. . . . This stuff happens every weekend at some eating and drinking establishment in Hennepin County, and it is rarely charged. . . . They have better things to do with their resources than to go around prosecuting false imprisonment cases from a woman being taken into the men's room or a man being taken into the women's room at a bar at closing time."

Klobuchar and Jones buried the hatchet; in 2009, she supported his nomination to be U.S. attorney for Minnesota.

Two: As a prosecutor, Klobuchar promoted a practice that is now common, electronically recording the interrogations of suspects, but argued that police must be able to record interactions with suspects without telling them they were being recorded. "You want to do it so that you're not interfering with the normal interrogation," she told the *New York Times*.

Three: One of her most influential mentors is former vice president Walter Mondale. She worked as an intern in his office in 1980 and canvassed for the Carter-Mondale campaign later that year; Mondale joined her law firm in 1989, and she spent parts of the next two years working part-time with him on "business development, speeches, and other civic activities." Mondale attended her swearing-in ceremonies as county attorney and senator, and the former vice president gave a toast at her wedding. She mentions him 34 times in her 2015 autobiography, *The Senator Next Door*.

Four: In April 2005, Klobuchar announced that she was officially running for U.S. Senate. In September 2005, the National Republican Senatorial Committee made several requests to the Hennepin County Attorney's Office for public records from Klobuchar's time in office. The office provided her travel records by May 2006 and, by July, some basic statistics about her office's caseload. In August 2006, the office responded that her daily schedules and matters referred to the county Domestic Fatality Review Board were not considered public information. (By February, almost all of Klobuchar's serious rivals in the Democratic Senate primary had withdrawn, and she won the party's endorsement in June.)

In October 2006, Minnesota's commissioner of the Department of Administration, Dana Badgerow, concluded that the Hennepin County Attorney's Office did not respond to the NRSC requests in a timely manner as required by law.

Five: Klobcuhar wrote in *The Senator Next Door* that the first lawmaker to endorse her for Senate was then–state representative Keith Ellison, who went on to be a congressman and DNC official and is currently the state attorney general. "He wrote me a $50 check on the spot, pledging to help me any way he could." In 2018, when a woman accused Ellison of assault, Klobuchar said on *Meet the Press*, "He is still addressing this to the people of Minnesota, and I think it's being reviewed, and I know that he is moving forward." When asked if she would campaign with him, Klobuchar responded, "I will campaign with our ticket when the time comes."

Six: She's cultivated a modest, middle-class image in her time in office. In September 2007, in her first year as a U.S. senator, she lamented the wealth of her colleagues: "A lot of the senators are multimillionaires. And I think I heard that but until you really experience it, you drive up in your Saturn . . . to the national Capitol and you have someone in a Cadillac next door, it is sort of a funny image." OpenSecrets analyzed her financial disclosure forms and estimated her net worth to be $923,022 in 2007. But that was relatively "poor" by Senate standards; at that time the median net worth in the chamber was $2.2 million.

Seven: In 2009, Klobuchar voted for the Affordable Care Act, which included a new, 2.3 percent excise tax on medical devices such as pacemakers, ultrasound machines, ventilators, and artificial hips. Almost immediately after its passage, Klobuchar and her fellow Minnesota senator Al Franken set about attempting to get it repealed. In 2015, a two-year suspension of the tax went into effect, and Klobuchar said, "I opposed the medical device tax from the start and have led Senate efforts with Sen. Hatch to repeal it because of its impact on manufacturing and innovation in Minnesota and across our country." Many medical- device manufacturers are based in her home state; from 2013 to 2018, her third-largest contributor was Cargill, Inc., which donated $53,785 between individual employee contributions and the company's political-action committee.

Eight: In school lunches, the tomato paste in pizza sauce makes the pizza qualify as a serving of vegetables. In 2011, the U.S. Department of Agriculture contemplated changes to school-lunch programs that downgrade the assessment of the nutritional value of tomato paste. Klobuchar wrote to Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack that "tomato paste contributes dietary fiber, potassium—a nutrient of concern for children—as well as Vitamins A & C. It is delivered to kids in popular school items they enjoy eating and drives [school-lunch and breakfast-program] participation." Congress passed legislation ensuring that the existing nutrition rules wouldn't change.

Schwan Food Company, based in Marshall, Minn., is one of the country's biggest producers of frozen pizza, with more than $3 billion a year in annual sales, and it boasts that it produces 70 percent of the pizzas served in school lunches.

Nine: In her 2006 campaign for Senate, she ripped her opponent, Representative Mark Kennedy, for voting for earmarks, listing "the bridges to nowhere, the rain forest in Iowa, the waterless urinals in Michigan" and pledging to cut them. In an analysis of congressional earmarks, OpenSecrets.org found that Klobuchar sponsored or co-sponsored 103 earmarks totaling $200

million in fiscal year 2008, 88 earmarks totaling $133 million in fiscal year 2009, and 88 earmarks totaling $117 million in fiscal year 2010. This put her in the top third in the U.S. Senate in the first year and in middle of the pack the following years.

The earmarks included $89 million for light-rail projects over the three-year period, $1.6 million in defense appropriations bill for a "Tire to Track Transformer System for Light Vehicles" from Mattracks Inc. of Karlstad, Minn., and several multimillion-dollar earmarks for plasma sterilizer from Minneapolis-based Phygen Inc.

Ten: In 2010, Klobuchar took to the floor of the Senate to criticize a column by Robin Givhan, in the *Washington Post* style section, about the allegedly "drab" clothing of Supreme Court nominee Elena Kagan. "There was a lengthy, long article this weekend in one of our major newspapers about Elena Kagan's clothing describing it in, I would say, rather critical terms, talking about at length her leg-crossing style. . . . I never thought I'd be discussing this in this chamber but in fact this was a major article and stirred much commentary all over the blogs. I don't think that such an article was ever written about Chief Justice Roberts . . . or was such an article written about Justice Alito or was such an article written about Justice Rehnquist when he was being considered by this great body?" Whatever one thinks of the fashion beat, Givhan had in fact written critiques of the "old fashioned" attire of John Roberts and his family, noted that Samuel Alito and his wife "selected their wardrobe from the same middle ground," and remarked that Justice Renquist wore his "personalized robe, with its gleaming frill, in a rather slovenly manner."

Eleven: In 2011, Justin Bieber declared in an interview with a music station in Washington, D.C., that Klobuchar should be "locked up" for sponsoring a bill that would make profiting from illegal streaming of copyrighted content a felony. "Whomever she is she needs to know that I'm saying she needs to be locked up," he said. "People need to have the freedom. . . . People need to be able to sing songs. I just think that's ridiculous."

Twelve: In 2013, Klobuchar voted for the proposal by Senate majority leader Harry Reid to eliminate the filibuster for administration nominations and judicial nominees, except for those to the Supreme Court. "I think we go into this knowing this would apply whether a Republican is president or a Democrat," she said. "The key is just to move some of these things."

But by September 2018, she said that changing the rules on the filibuster had been a mistake. "I don't think we should've made that change, when we look back at it," she said. "But it happened because we were so frustrated, because President Obama wasn't able to get his nominees."

Thirteen: In 2015, a bipartisan bill to fight human trafficking hit a snag when Democrats realized that the bill's provision to create a Domestic Trafficking Victims' Fund barred any use of the funds for abortions. After a few days of Senate Democrats' wondering who on their side had allowed the language to be included without objection, Klobuchar announced that "a staff member who reviewed the reintroduced bill had seen the [anti-abortion] provision in the bill but did not inform" her. Some Democratic senators anonymously griped that a lawmaker blaming her staff looked unprofessional. According to *Politico*, "At one point, Klobuchar—along with Sens. Patrick Leahy

of Vermont and Maria Cantwell of Washington—got in a heated discussion during a closed-door lunch over how the anti-abortion provision had been overlooked."

Fourteen: Klobuchar's relationship with Sheryl Sandberg, former vice president at Google and currently the chief operating officer of Facebook, is complicated. Sandberg blurbed Klobuchar's memoir, declaring that "her story radiates with warmth, humor, and candor. I hope it will inspire women everywhere to take part not only in public life, but in all endeavors in their lives, with the same passion."

But the *New York Times* reported last year that in October 2017, after Klobuchar and Virginia senator Mark Warner introduced legislation to compel Facebook and other Internet firms to disclose who bought political ads on their sites, Sandberg reached out to express her strong disagreement:

> Ms. Sandberg also reached out to Ms. Klobuchar. She had been friendly with the senator, who is featured on the website for Lean In, Ms. Sandberg's empowerment initiative. Ms. Sandberg had contributed a blurb to Ms. Klobuchar's 2015 memoir, and the senator's chief of staff had previously worked at Ms. Sandberg's charitable foundation.
>
> But in a tense conversation shortly after the ad legislation was introduced, Ms. Sandberg complained about Ms. Klobuchar's attacks on the company, said a person who was briefed on the call. Ms. Klobuchar did not back down on her legislation. But she dialed down her criticism in at least one venue important to the company: After blasting Facebook repeatedly that fall on her own Facebook page, Ms. Klobuchar hardly mentioned the company in posts between November and February.

Fifteen: By February 2018, Klobuchar said it would be a "great idea" for the federal government to impose fines on social-media companies if they don't remove "bots." "Someone once said that these systems were set up without alarms, without locks, and big surprise, bad guys are coming in and manipulating people," she said. "And that is what's happening, and worse, literally committing crimes, when they tell people they can text in and vote." (By May, she was cautioning Democrats to make sure they didn't sound relentlessly focused on the Russia probe. She said that when she met with constituents, "They're not asking me about Russian bots, okay? They're asking me about soybean exports.")

Sixteen: In 2015, Klobuchar cosponsored legislation to require the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission to set mandatory safety standards for detergent pods. The CPSC was direted to issue rules requiring safer, child-resistant packaging for liquid detergent packets. "To a little kid, they literally look like candy," the senator warned.

Seventeen: In 2015, Klobuchar and her fellow senator Al Franken received some flak for calling for a higher minimum wage while not paying interns in their offices. Klobuchar began paying her interns this month.

Eighteen: In April 2018, she said she expected that her former colleague Franken would come back to public life in some manner. "He's had two acts and he's still going to have a third," she said. "As we're dealing with a change in the workplace. . . . We have to make sure there's due process and graduated sanctions."

Nineteen: A review of Senate employment records from 2001 to 2016 found that Klobuchar had the highest level of staff turnover of any senator.

Twenty: Apparently, she's remained on good terms with her exes. In several public appearances, she boasted she "raised $17,000 from ex-boyfriends."

January 15, 2019

Twenty Things You Probably Didn't Know about Kamala Harris

By Jim Geraghty

One: As both a district attorney and state attorney general, Harris pushed for a new statewide law that lets prosecutors charge parents with misdemeanors if their children are chronically truant. "We are putting parents on notice," she declared. "If you fail in your responsibility to your kids, we are going to work to make sure you face the full force and consequences of the law."

Two: Harris strongly supports "familial DNA searching," in which police take DNA samples from crime scenes and compare them to existing databases to look for not just any direct matches in criminal databases, but any *familial* matches. Police have gradually expanded the practice's reach, from checking DNA collected against existing samples of convicted criminals to checking them against samples in the databases of genealogy web sites and genetic-testing companies like 23andMe and Ancestry.com. California allows the collection and preservation of DNA samples from anyone who is arrested, even if they're not charged with a crime.

Three: Harris also has been a strong advocate of civil asset forfeiture. She supported a bill in California that would have allowed prosecutors to seize assets before initiating criminal proceedings—a power now available only at the federal level—if there were a "substantial probability" they would eventually initiate such proceedings. Besides cases involving violent crimes, the legislation allowed seizures in cases involving such crimes as bribery, gambling, and trafficking endangered species. Harris endorsed the bill after then-attorney general Eric Holder sharply limited civil asset forfeiture among federal prosecutors. She argued that the practice gave local and state law-enforcement officials "more tools to target the illicit profits [of transnational criminal groups] and dismantle these dangerous organizations."

Four: As San Francisco district attorney, Harris created "Back on Track," an anti-recidivism program that she expanded as state attorney general. The program received $750,000 in federal funding and quite a bit of praise from crime-policy experts. But it faced criticism early in its history, when illegal immigrant Alexander Izaguirre, who had pleaded guilty to selling drugs, was selected and graduated, only to later grab a woman's purse and run her down in an SUV, severely injuring her.

As the *Los Angeles Times* put it, "Harris' office had been allowing Izaguirre and other illegal immigrants to stay out of prison by training them for jobs they cannot legally hold." Harris said she had been unaware that Back on Track had been training illegal immigrants and that they would no longer be eligible for the program.

Five: In 2012, she submitted a brief supporting an illegal immigrant's application for a law license. In 2014, the California Supreme Court ruled in the immigrant's favor, even though the California State Bar's rules state that it is disqualifying professional misconduct to commit a criminal act.

Six: In her first speech on the Senate floor, Harris declared, "An undocumented immigrant is not a criminal." She later avowed the belief that illegal immigration is "a civil violation, not a crime."

This classification applies to only a portion of those in the country without permission. First, entering the country illegally has criminal penalties. Overstaying a visa is considered a civil violation, not a criminal one, with deportation as the appropriate penalty. But reentry without permission *after* deportation is a crime, as is, in most cases, working in the United States without legal residency, since it almost always involves some falsification of documents or lying on work forms under penalty of perjury.

Seven: Harris's reputation as a tough prosecutor has played a key part in her political rise, and she continues to tout the high rate of felony convictions on her watch. But in 2010, *SF Weekly* reviewed the work of her office and concluded that "felony convictions for cases that actually go to trial and reach a jury verdict—a comparatively small group that nevertheless includes some of a district attorney's most violent and emotionally charged cases—have declined significantly over the past two years." The review found that in 2009, San Francisco prosecutors "won a lower percentage of their felony jury trials than their counterparts at district attorneys' offices covering the 10 largest cities in California," and San Francisco's rate dropped further in the first quarter of 2010. Harris's 71 percent conviction rate on felony cases had been boosted by a significant increase in pre-trial plea agreements.

Eight: In October 2017, Harris declared that she would rather shut down the government than vote for a spending bill that did not address the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program and ensure those covered by the program would not be deported. "I will not vote for an end-of-year spending bill until we are clear about what we are going to do to protect and take care of our DACA young people in this country," she said. And she has kept her word, at least so far.

Nine: In April 2018, Harris urged the Senate Appropriations Committee to "reduce funding for beds in the federal immigration system," reject calls to hire more Border Patrol personnel, and "reduce funding for the administration's reckless immigration enforcement operations."

Ten: In 2010, a California Superior Court judge declared that as San Francisco district attorney, Harris had violated defendants' rights by hiding damaging information about a police drug-lab technician and was indifferent to demands that that the lab account for its failings. The crime-lab technician had been convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence in 2008; district attorneys are obligated to hand over to the defense information about prosecution witnesses that could be used to challenge their credibility. Prosecutors' failure to disclose the information about the technician led to the dismissal of more than 600 drug cases.

Eleven: Some have asked tough questions about whether Harris, as San Francisco district attorney, did everything she could to root out abuse in the local Catholic churches. Prosecutors had obtained personnel files from the Archdiocese of San Francisco dealing with sexual abuse going back decades. But her office did not prosecute any priests, and she argued that those records were not subject to public-records laws:

> In 2005, while she was San Francisco's district attorney, Harris rebuffed a public-records request by SF Weekly to release personnel files from the Archdiocese of San Francisco. (Her predecessor had planned to make them public after prosecuting criminal priests, but the California Supreme Court stopped those cases when it declared unconstitutional a 2002 law that lifted the criminal statute of limitations.) Similar archives in Boston had exposed the scope of the scandal there. "We're not interested in selling out our victims to look good in the paper," Harris told *SF Weekly* in a statement—this, even though many of those victims pleaded with her to release the documents.

Twelve: In 2004, San Francisco Police officer Isaac Espinoza was shot and killed by David Hill, a young gang member with an AK-47. Hill also shot another officer in the leg. Days after Hill's arrest, then-district attorney Harris announced that her office would not seek the death penalty. This prompted Senator Dianne Feinstein to declare, while speaking at Espinoza's funeral, "This is not only the definition of tragedy, it's the special circumstance called for by the death-penalty law." The comment drew a standing ovation from the crowd of mostly police. Hill was ultimately sentenced to life without parole. Feinstein later told reporters that if she'd known Harris was against the death penalty, she probably wouldn't have endorsed her for D.A. in the first place.

In 2009, Harris again received criticism for refusing to pursue the death penalty against Edwin Ramos, an illegal immigrant and member of MS-13 who gunned down a father and two sons. As a teenager, Ramos twice served probation for violent crimes but was not deported. Ramos was sentenced to 183-years-to-life without parole.

Thirteen: Harris's most financially significant decision as state attorney general came in 2012, when she negotiated a $25 billion settlement deal with the nation's five largest mortgage companies (Bank of America, JPMorgan Chase, CitiFinancial, GMAC/Ally Financial, and Wells Fargo) after the companies were accused of improper foreclosure practices.

By 2013, the state reported that California homeowners had received $18.4 billion in mortgage relief from the deal. When all was said and done, roughly 33,000 homeowners received an average reduction of $137,280 on their first mortgage. That sounds like a lot until one looks at

the scale of the problem: More than 600,000 Californians received a foreclosure notice in 2009, and in 2012, when the agreement was struck, more than 30 percent of California homeowners with mortgages owed more than their houses were worth.

Fourteen: One bank that was not part of Harris's settlement was California-based OneWest. A 2013 internal memo from the California attorney general's office, first published by The Intercept, alleged that OneWest and its CEO, Steven Mnuchin, violated state foreclosure laws and recommended filing charges against him. Prosecutors claimed they had "uncovered evidence suggestive of widespread misconduct" and "identified over a thousand legal violations."

But Harris, the state attorney general, did not pursue charges. She later told *The Hill*, "We went and we followed the facts and the evidence, and it's a decision my office made. We pursued it just like any other case. We go and we take a case wherever the facts lead us."

In 2016, Mnuchin—who would soon be President Trump's nominee to be secretary of the treasury—donated $2,000 to Harris's Senate campaign. She voted against his confirmation anyway.

Fifteen: For nearly ninety years, California state law prohibited images of handguns from being used in signs for gun stores. In 2014, after Harris's office cited several gun shops, they sued, arguing that the law violated the First Amendment. Harris's office argued that the law was needed to prevent handgun-related crime and suicide. Last year a federal judge ruled "the government has provided no evidence directly linking [the law] to reduced handgun suicide or crime," concluded that the law was a "highly paternalistic approach to limiting speech," and declared it "unconstitutional on its face."

Sixteen: Starting in 1993, Harris began dating Willie Brown, then the speaker of the California Assembly and later a candidate for mayor of San Francisco—a relationship that brought her in contact with many of the city's political and financial movers and shakers. Early in 1994, Brown named her as his appointee to the state's Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board, a job that paid $97,088 a year. Six months later, he named her to the California Medical Assistance Commission, a post which paid $72,000 a year.

Into 1994, press accounts described Harris as Brown's girlfriend. He was still married, and in his early 60s; she had just turned 30. The relationship had a surprising and tumultuous end, as James Richardson describes in *Willie Brown: A Biography:*

> Columnist Herb Caen all but predicted two days after the election that Brown would wed Kamala Harris, his constant companion throughout the campaign. "Keep an eye on these two," Caen wrote. No mention was made of what Brown would do about Blanche, to whom he was still married. But the day after Christmas, Brown stunned his friends by announcing that he was breaking up with Kamala. Brown invited Blanche to appear with him on stage for his swearing-in and to hold the Bible. A television reporter from KPIX caught up to Blanche, who had kept a low profile throughout the campaign, and asked her what it was like to live with the future mayor.

"Difficult," was her one-word answer.

Seventeen: Late last year, Los Angeles city officials asked why "armed, plain-clothes LAPD officers were dispatched to California cities outside of Los Angeles at least a dozen times to provide security for U.S. Sen. Kamala Harris at public events." LAPD officers traveled with Harris to San Francisco, Sacramento, Fresno, and San Diego. Los Angeles taxpayers covered about $28,000 of the cost for airline tickets, hotel stays, car rentals, and meals in an arrangement that retired law-enforcement officers called "unprecedented."

Eighteen: In 2009 and 2010, Harris contributed to the liberal blog Daily Kos, where she characterized the opposition to Supreme Court nominee Sonia Sotomayor as "bigotry and narrow-mindedness," warned that Texas oil companies were "invading" California by funding efforts to repeal an initiative requiring reductions in greenhouse-gas emissions, and opposed Arizona's since-struck-down immigration law, declaring that we "can't afford to divert scarce local law-enforcement resources to enforcing federal immigration laws."

Nineteen. Harris has proposed a sweeping tax reform that would create a refundable tax credit for all workers, peaking at $3,000 for single adults and $6,000 for married couples—meaning that taxpayers could collect cash even if they don't actually owe any taxes. The worth of the credit would decline the higher a taxpayer's income, eventually reaching zero for childless single adults making more than $50,000 a year, single adults with children making more than $80,000 a year, and married couples with children making more than $100,000 a year. The plan would repeal all of the 2017 tax cuts for earners making more than $100,000, would cost roughly $2.5 trillion to $3 trillion over ten years, would constitute a serious marriage penalty, according to experts.

Twenty: In April, Harris made an appearance on *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*, where the hostess asked, "If you had to be stuck in an elevator with either President Trump, Mike Pence, or Jeff Sessions, who would it be?" Harris replied, "Does one of us have to come out alive?"

February 13, 2019

Twenty Things You Probably Didn't Know about Kirsten Gillibrand

By Jim Geraghty

One: Kirsten Gillibrand's maternal grandmother was Polly Noonan, who became the longtime trusted aide of Erastus Corning II, Albany's "mayor for life" from 1942 to 1983. Former New York governor Mario Cuomo once characterized their relationship this way: "Corning was the de facto leader. Polly was the leader." Cuomo had Noonan organize events for his 1982 gubernatorial campaign and served as vice chairwoman of the Democratic State Committee during Cuomo's three terms as governor. "Mayor Corning's most influential confidante, Noonan handled patronage

and political campaigns, handing out jobs that were the lifeblood of the old Democratic machine," the *Albany Times Union* wrote in 2001. *The Sopranos* star Edie Falco played Noonan in last year's off-Broadway play *The True*.

As Gillibrand put it in her 2014 autobiography, *Off the Sidelines: Raise Your Voice, Change the World*, "the mayor was simply part of our family."

Polly Noonan's daughter Penny, Kirsten's mother, married Doug Rutnick, a longtime Albany lobbyist who worked for cigarette maker Altria and Knicks owner Cablevision, and who was close to former governor George Pataki. The pair founded a law firm together and divorced when the senator was 22. Rutnick also briefly did legal and lobbying work for the organization "Nxivm," although there is no indication he or his daughter had any idea they were a notorious sex cult.

Two: In a 2013 interview, when asked what she wanted her political legacy to be, Gillibrand answered, "That I was a champion for those who don't have fancy lobbyists in Washington, for the people who feel they're voiceless in government."

Three: Gillibrand went to high school at the prestigious Emma Willard School in Troy, arguably the most prestigious private high school in New York. In 1984 she enrolled at Dartmouth; she spent the summer of 1986 at Beijing Normal University in China and the fall semester at Tunghai University in Taiwan.

After Dartmouth she attended UCLA Law School and spent a summer interning in the Albany office of then-senator Al D'Amato. She was also selected for internships at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York and at the offices of United Nations Crime Prevention in Vienna, Austria.

In her book, Gillibrand describes her childhood as "the stereotypical 1970s middle-class experience—cul de sac, family dinners." The *Washington Post* described Gillibrand's upbringing as that of a "middle-class Roman Catholic Albany schoolgirl."

Four: Immediately after law school, Gillibrand moved to Manhattan to take a job as an associate at the law firm of Davis Polk & Wardwell, a firm whose past associates include former senator John Danforth, Federal Reserve chairman Jerome Powell, and former president Grover Cleveland.

She worked at the firm for nine years, and the *New York Times* reported that she "was involved in some of the most sensitive matters related to the defense of the tobacco giant Philip Morris as it confronted pivotal legal battles beginning in the mid-1990s." Documents uncovered by the newspaper indicated Gillibrand helped the company with public-relations questions as well as legal matters: "In 1998, for example, Roger G. Whidden, Philip Morris's vice president for worldwide regulatory affairs, wrote Ms. Gillibrand a letter along with a draft document containing proposed responses to possible questions from reporters about nitrosamines, a cancer-causing agent in cigarettes."

Gillibrand declined to answer questions about her work at the firm, citing attorney–client privilege. In 1995, her hourly rate for legal work was $305 per hour.

Five: In 1992, during her time with Davis Polk, Gillibrand was selected for a prestigious clerkship with appeals-court judge Roger Miner. "Because the position was so coveted, and Gillibrand had not finished in the top 10 percent of her law class, it was assumed that she received the position based on her father's D'Amato connections," *New York* magazine wrote.

Six: In 2000 she ran into Andrew Cuomo—Bill Clinton's HUD secretary and the son of the former governor—at a Democratic fundraiser and said she wanted to get into public service. She writes in her autobiography that she told Cuomo, "Mr. Secretary, I loved your speech. I agreed with everything you said. But I have to tell you, it's not so easy. I've been trying to break into a career in public service for a couple of years now, and I cannot get my foot in the door. Not at the U.S. attorney's office, not on Hillary's campaign. I'm hardworking, well educated . . . and I can't break in. It really seems to me that it's an insider's game."

(It is worth recalling that Gillibrand's grandmother and Cuomo's father had been close political allies.)

Gillibrand writes that after one interview in Cuomo's office, he said, "I'll make you special counsel. I'll pay you the highest salary that I can under the federal rules." Her work with HUD lasted about seven months, as the Bush administration took over in 2001.

According to *New York* magazine, "Gillibrand returned to corporate law, becoming a $500,000-a-year partner at Boies, Schiller & Flexner, working with star Democratic litigator David Boies. She also began raising money for New York Democratic heavyweights like Hillary Clinton and Eliot Spitzer."

Seven: In 2003, a brief item in *The New York Times* painted Gillibrand as a bit less than fully honest while interacting with Ambassador Carol Moseley Braun, whose Senate career had ended the previous decade with controversy over her public defense of dictator Sani Abacha, but who was launching a longshot bid for president:

> "I'm so glad you're running—I think it's a statement in itself," Kirsten Gillibrand, 35, a partner at a law firm, told Ambassador Moseley Braun at a Women's Campaign Fund dinner this week in New York. "I don't think she has a chance to win," she whispered later, admitting that she would probably pick another name in the primary. "I'll probably fund-raise for someone else, but I'll still give her a check."

Eight: She contemplated running for Congress in 2004, but Hillary Clinton talked her out of it. Gillibrand describes a phone call with Hillary in the winter of that year: "When I hung up, I knew that she thought I should wait. A race in 2004 was premature and most likely unwinnable. Eventually, [Gillibrand's husband] Jonathan and I agreed that Hillary's instincts were right."

Nine: Speaking of Jonathan, he founded a venture-capital firm, Venture Capital Partners. Despite the glamorous and lucrative image of venture-capital firms, the income and capital gains from the firm were fairly modest as Kirsten Gillibrand's career in the House of Representatives began. Jonathan Gillibrand's net business income was $20,390 in 2005, his business income and a

reported capital gain totaled $48,535 in 2006, and his business income was $13,755 and capital gains were $40,255 in 2007.

Ten: In 2004 Gillibrand attended a candidate-training event run by the Women's Campaign Fund, where one of her classmates was former Westchester County district attorney Jeanine Pirro, who would later run for U.S. Senate and state attorney general and is now a Fox News Channel host and ardent defender of Donald Trump. Gillibrand wrote, "She famously lost page ten of her announcement speech and took a full thirty seconds to regain her composure, and although I didn't support her candidacy, my heart was right there with her. [She] lost but [wasn't] broken by it, and that also felt instructive. I still feared how painful and embarrassing it would be to campaign and lose."

Eleven: In 2006, Gillibrand ran for the House of Representatives against Republican John Sweeney. That year, Democrats picked up 32 seats and the majority, driven in large part by opposition to the Iraq War, the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and various scandals. On November 1, the Sweeney campaign was rocked when the *Albany Times Union* and *New York Daily News* reported that Sweeney had allegedly grabbed his wife by the neck during a dispute the previous December. Sweeney denied it, and his wife issued a statement declaring that "at no time has John hurt me or done anything other than try to protect me. There were never any injuries to me." (One year later, after the couple divorced, Gayle Sweeney said her pre-election statement had been "coerced.") Gillibrand said, "It is Mr. Sweeney's word versus that of numerous sources and trusted local news organizations across our region."

New York magazine noted, "Gillibrand has never denied that her campaign was the source of the leak despite being asked about it several times. She defeated Sweeney by six points."

In her autobiography, Gillbrand described the race hinging on a completely different factor: "All by myself, standing on a street corner talking about Iraq policy, I wasn't that captivating to voters. But once Sweeney started hurling insults at me, people felt offended and paid attention to the race. Nobody likes a man who maligns a new mother. If Sweeney had had the restraint to ignore me, he probably would have won."

Twelve: Once she was in the House, Gillibrand voted for a bill that would withdraw most U.S. troops from Iraq by April 1, 2008. In 2007, she said the Bush administration's "surge" strategy "is not a change in direction. It is, rather, more of the same. . . . The president is pursuing a strategy that history shows does not work." While the deployment of additional troops was not the only factor that changed in Iraq in 2007 and 2008—the Anbar Awakening, a temporary ceasefire by radical Shiite cleric Moktada al-Sadr, and the Pentagon's different approach to counterinsurgency were significant factors as well—U.S. casualties and declined dramatically by mid 2008.

Thirteen: The senator's 2015 federal tax return showed that Gillibrand and her husband had received a $457,200 cash gift from her British in-laws, Sydney and Angela Gillibrand. From 1950 to 1995 Sydney worked at British Aerospace, rising to the level of vice president. He then moved on to become chairman of the British engineering firm AMEC, a lead contractor in Ground Zero cleanup after the 9/11 terror attacks. Outside wealth-management analysts suggested the large gift was part of the elder Gillibrands' estate planning.

Fourteen: Many profiles note that Gillibrand's positions "evolved" when she moved from the U.S. House of Representatives to the Senate. Evolution rarely moved so quickly. In 2008, the NRA rated her 93 out of 100. In 2009, shortly after being appointed to the U.S. Senate to replace Hillary Clinton, she told *Newsday* that she slept with two rifles under her bed, adding that "if I want to protect my family, if I want to have a weapon in the home, that should be my right." But by 2010, the NRA Political Victory Fund rated her an "F." In 2018, she told *Newsday*, "I just didn't take the time that I should have to understand the issue from someone else's perspective, not just from my own family or from my own community."

Fifteen: As a member of the House, Gillibrand took stances on immigration that line up well with those of President Trump. As *The New York Times* has noted, she "opposed any sort of amnesty for illegal immigrants, supported deputizing local law enforcement officers to enforce federal immigration laws, spoke out against Gov. Eliot Spitzer's proposal to allow illegal immigrants to have driver's licenses, and sought to make English the official language of the United States."

By 2018, she told *60 Minutes* her old positions reflected the lack of diversity in her district:

"I came from a district that was 98 percent white. We have immigrants, but not a lot of immigrants. And I hadn't really spent the time to hear those kind of stories about what's it like to worry that your dad could be taken away at any moment."

Sixteen: *New York* magazine described how she changed her position on gay marriage in 2009 because David Paterson, the governor appointing her to the Senate seat, effectively demanded it:

> Paterson also asked her to make one phone call. One of the few constituencies the increasingly embattled governor could rely on was the gay community, and Gillibrand had expressed support in interviews for civil unions instead of legalizing gay marriage. Paterson instructed Gillibrand to call Alan Van Capelle, executive director of the Empire State Pride Agenda, and promise she would reverse her position. Gillibrand made the call, and then headed to Albany.

Gillibrand's old stances were quickly forgotten. By October 2010, Jonathan Van Meter wrote a glowing profile in *Vogue*, touting "her very correct gay politics. She is unequivocally supportive of same-sex marriage and has been one of the loudest voices on the effort to repeal Don't Ask Don't Tell."

Seventeen: Shortly after Paterson selected Gillibrand, *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd wrote a column that trashed the new senator, contending that she was secretly disliked by the rest of the state's congressional delegation:

> [Gillibrand] is known as opportunistic and sharp-elbowed. Tracy Flick is her nickname among colleagues in the New York delegation, many of whom were M.I.A. at her Albany announcement.
>
> Fellow Democrats were warning Harry Reid on Friday that he was going to have his hands full with the new senator because she's "a pain."

Eighteen: Despite the perception that she was from "upstate," it did not take long for most of Manhattan's movers and shakers to warm up to her. That 2010 *Vogue* profile featured gushing quotes from Tina Brown, then the editor in chief of the *Daily Beast*; Andrea Mitchell of NBC News; Senator Chuck Schumer; and then-congressman Anthony Weiner.

The article detailed Gillibrand's participation in Fashion's Night Out, an annual event launched by *Vogue* editor-in-chief Anna Wintour to get shoppers into stores in the height of the recession. Gillibrand made appearances at the Elie Tahari boutique at Saks, the BCBGMaxAzria store in midtown, and Nanette Lepore on Madison Avenue. A sample:

> Here is something you don't see every day: a United States senator, looking like a million bucks in a little black dress and high heels, jitterbugging in a Manhattan department store. It could mean only one thing: Fashion's Night Out. It is a Friday night in early September, and Gillibrand is at the Elie Tahari boutique at Saks, the first of her three stops through the mad crush that has taken over the city, when the music gets cranked and a group of professional dancers take the floor. One of the guys grabs Gillibrand's hand, and she gamely heads to the dance floor and begins to cut it up like a seasoned pro (all those gay friends!). Her gracefulness is striking.

Nineteen: In 2010, the Gillibrands sold their Hudson, N.Y., home for $1.3 million. They moved to a five-bedroom home in Brunswick, N.Y., paying $335,000. By 2017, *Vogue* came back for a second profile, and the senator lamented the condition of the house's backyard tennis court: "I desperately want to redo it, but it's $50,000, so we can't touch it."

Also in that *Vogue* interview, Gillibrand lamented that members of Congress are "in a bubble. . . . A lot of members of Congress are isolated. They tend to be affluent. They tend to have a lot of people doing things *for* them."

Twenty: On October 25, 2018, Gillibrand participated in the final debate of her Senate reelection campaign and was asked about running for president in 2020.

> Moderator: Can you tell New Yorkers, who plan to vote for you on November sixth, that you will, if re-elected, serve out your six-year Senate term?
>
> Gillibrand: I will. [*She went on to discuss how her campaign is reaching out to the grassroots.*]
>
> Moderator: Just want to make this clear, you're saying that you will not get out of the race and you will not run for president? You will serve your six years?
>
> Gillibrand: I will serve my six-year term.

January 17, 2019

Twenty Things You Probably Didn't Know about Joe Biden

By Jim Geraghty

One: As a young man, JoeBiden received five student draft deferments during the Vietnam War—which just happens to be the same number of deferments received by former vice president Dick Cheney. Biden later was disqualified from service because of the asthma that he suffered as a teenager. Oddly, the asthma was not severe enough to stop Biden from playing on his high-school football team or playing halfback for the University of Delaware Blue Hens.

Two: In the earliest moments of his Senate career, Biden was a proponent of forced busing, which involved sending white children to schools in heavily black neighborhoods and vice versa. But by 1974, Biden had revised his position to support forced busing in the South, where he said segregation was "de jure," but not in northern states such as Delaware, where it was "de facto."

By 1975, Biden had shifted further, supporting an amendment from Senator Jesse Helms that would bar the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) from collecting any data about the race of students or teachers. In addition, HEW could not "require any school . . . to classify teachers or students by race." Helms said explicitly, "This is an anti-busing amendment." Biden surprised many supporters by declaring, "I have become convinced that busing is a bankrupt concept" and later calling it "an asinine policy."

Biden then introduced his own amendment, which declared that school systems could not use federal funds "to assign teachers or students to schools . . . for reasons of race," which passed. Ed Brooke, a Massachusetts Republican and the first black senator ever to be popularly elected, called the vote on Biden's amendment "the greatest symbolic defeat for civil rights since 1964."

Three: Biden wrote in his 2007 memoir *Promises to Keep*, "I've stuck to my middle-of-the-road position on abortion for more than thirty years. I still vote against partial birth abortion and federal funding, and I'd like to find ways to make it easier for scared young mothers to choose not to have an abortion, but I will also vote against a constitutional amendment that strips a woman of her right to make her own choice." In interviews in 2008 and 2015, Biden said he believes life begins at conception, but as he put it in the latter interview, "I'm not prepared to say that to other God-fearing, non-God-fearing people that have a different view." In 1995 and 1996, he voted to ban partial-birth abortion.

Whatever personal objections Biden had to abortion, they had no real impact on policies in the Obama administration, which defended federal funding for abortions at every opportunity.

Four: Biden voted against Robert Bork's nomination to the Supreme Court in 1987, but wrote in *Promises to Keep* that the judge had been unfairly demonized. "Robert Bork was a man of capacious and sharp intelligence. I didn't believe, like many of the liberal interest groups did, that

Bork was on a one-man crusade intent on stifling individual rights and liberties. . . . For example, I knew Bork contributed to Planned Parenthood. I came to believe that Bork was probably pro-choice personally, but he was intellectually honest in saying, in effect, *I will vote for a pro-choice candidate to vote for legislation allowing women to have abortions. But I cannot find that explicit right in the Constitution, so in my role as judge, I cannot protect that right just because I personally find it worthy of protection*. . . . Part of what Bork argued remains a legitimate concern: If you let nine individuals appointed for life set the bar, then what stops them from simply making up fundamental rights on their own?"

Five: Biden cosponsored the 1984 Crime Control Act, which abolished federal parole, reestablished the death penalty, expanded civil asset forfeiture, and increased federal penalties for cultivation, possession, or transfer of marijuana.

In 1991, Biden bragged about the sweeping scope of civil asset forfeiture: "Under our forfeiture statutes, the government can take everything you own. Everything from your car, to your house, to your bank account, not merely what they confiscate in terms of the dollars of the transaction you've been caught engaging in. They can take everything!"

Six: In June 1991, Biden bragged that his legislation would make more crimes eligible for the death penalty than would an alternative offered by the Bush administration and Senator Strom Thurmond: "The Biden crime bill before us calls for the death penalty for 51 offenses. . . . The president's bill calls for the death penalty on 46 offenses." He boasted, on final passage of compromise legislation, that it was "the single largest expansion of the federal death penalty in the history of the Congress."

Seven: Biden voted against authorizing the use of force in what became known as the Persian Gulf War in 1991, accusing the United Nations of being "willing to fight to the last American." He argued that no one had "laid out clearly what our vital interests are sufficient to have ten thousand, twenty thousand, thirty thousand, forty thousand Americans killed." The United States suffered 219 casualties in the Persian Gulf War.

Eight: In 2001, after the 9/11 attacks, he proposed to his staff, "This would be a good time to send, no strings attached, a check for $200 million to Iran." His staff was not receptive to the idea.

Nine: He repeatedly boasted that the PATRIOT Act—which passed in 2001 with his vote—was basically the same as a bill he introduced in 1994.

Ten: Biden found himself in controversy in October 2001 when he appeared to criticize the U.S. campaign of airstrikes against al-Qaeda and the Taliban during a speech at the Council on Foreign Relations. "How much longer does the bombing continue? Because we're going to pay every single hour. Every single day it continues, we're going to pay an escalating price in the Muslim world." Biden added that the bombing fueled criticism that "we're this high-tech bully that thinks from the air we can do whatever we want." About three weeks later, the Taliban retreated from Kandahar, their last stronghold.

Eleven: In 1998, Biden wrote in an op-ed in the *Washington Post* that "a policy based on sanctions does not guarantee that Saddam Hussein's weapons program will be curtailed. Ultimately, as long

as Saddam Hussein is at the helm, no inspectors can guarantee that they have rooted out the entirety of Saddam Hussein's weapons program. And I said the only way to remove Saddam is a massive military effort, led by the United States."

In July 2002, Biden chaired a Senate committee hearing featuring former Iraqi nuclear engineer Khidir Hamza, who'd defected from Iraq eight years earlier. Hamza warned that Saddam Hussein could develop nuclear weapons by 2005, and after the hearing Biden declared, "These weapons must be dislodged from Saddam, or Saddam must be dislodged from power."

He voted to authorize the use of force in what became known as the Iraq War in October. He would later claim that he believed that authorizing the use of force would give President Bush "a stronger hand to get Saddam Hussein to act responsibly, and it was a very bad bet that I made."

Twelve: Biden publicly stated that, at the moment of decision about the raid that would ultimately kill Osama bin Laden, he had believed the mission was not worth the risk and told Obama, "Mr. President, my suggestion is don't go." But in a 2018 interview, he said he had publicly overstated his doubts to ensure Obama got more credit for making the decision to launch the raid. Unnamed Biden aides also claimed that Hillary Clinton had falsely claimed she had completely supported the decision to launch the raid, calling her account of the raid decision the "a**-covering, opportunistic version."

Thirteen: Biden gave one of the eulogies at the funeral of South Carolina senator Strom Thurmond, who had filibustered the Civil Rights Act of 1957 and supported segregation for much of his career. He said: "Strom knew America was changing, and that there was a lot he didn't understand about that change. Much of that change challenged many of his long-held views. But he also saw his beloved South Carolina and the people of South Carolina changing as well, and he knew the time had come to change himself. But I believe the change came to him easily. I believe he welcomed it, because I watched others of his era fight that change and never ultimately change."

Fourteen: Also in Thurmond's eulogy, Biden told a wild story of stepping between the South Carolina senator and an unnamed angry tourist in the U.S. Senate:

> I was coming across to vote in the Senate and going up the escalator, and a fellow who apparently had held a longtime grudge against Senator Thurmond, a tourist, literally interposed himself between me and Strom and then said—and Thad may remember this—and said, "If you weren't so old, I would knock you"—and, Reverend, I will not say what he said—"I will knock you down." And I immediately stood between them. And Strom literally took off his coat and said, "Hold my coat, Joe." Swear to God. And I looked at him and said, "No, no, no, no, no, no." And with that, he went down and did 25 pushups. He had to be 88, 87. He stood up and looked at the man—he said, "If you weren't so young, I'd knock you down."

Fifteen: In 2005, the Senate passed a banking-reform bill that made it harder for consumers to file for bankruptcy protection. This was a longstanding goal of large banks and credit-card companies, many of which have headquarters in Biden's home state of Delaware, and Biden was the legislation's most important Democratic proponent. In addition, during the five preceding years that Biden and other senators had pushed for the changes, Biden's son Hunter had had a $100,000-

per-year consulting agreement with the bank MBNA. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, MBNA executives and employees contributed roughly $200,000 to Biden's campaigns from 1989 to 2010.

Sixteen: Biden got himself in hot water in 2007 when, during a meeting with the editorial board of the *Washington Post*, he compared schoolchildren in Iowa with those in the District of Columbia:

> There's less than 1 percent of the population of Iowa that is African American. There is probably less than 4 or 5 percent that are minorities. What is in Washington? So look, it goes back to what you start off with, what you're dealing with. . . . When you have children coming from dysfunctional homes, when you have children coming from homes where there's no books, where the mother from the time they're born doesn't talk to them—as opposed to the mother in Iowa who's sitting out there and talks to them, the kid starts out with a 300-word larger vocabulary at age three. Half this education gap exists before the kid steps foot in the classroom.

Seventeen: Biden, to an Iowa reporter, August 17, 2007: "I absolutely can say with certainty I would not be anybody's vice president. End of story. I guarantee I will not do it." While he agreed to be vetted, he reportedly initially turned down Obama's offer of the vice presidency.

Eighteen: In 2014, in a speech denouncing predatory lenders who focused on military families, Biden denounced "these Shylocks who took advantage of these women and men while overseas." Anti-Defamation League national director Abraham Foxman responded, "Shylock represents the medieval stereotype about Jews and remains an offensive characterization to this day. The Vice President should have been more careful." A few days later, Biden called Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew "the wisest man in the Orient."

Nineteen: Biden's first chief of staff as vice president, Ron Klain, apparently worked with allies of Hillary Clinton to discourage him from running for president in the 2016 cycle. On October 14, 2015, Ron Klain wrote to Clinton-campaign chairman John Podesta, "Thanks for inviting me into the campaign, and for sticking with me during the Biden anxiety. You are a great friend and a great leader. It's been a little hard for me to play such a role in the Biden demise—and I am definitely dead to them—but I'm glad to be on Team HRC." On October 21, Biden announced in the Rose Garden of the White House that he would not run for president.

Twenty: Biden has offered some tough assessments of Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign. In early 2017 at the University of Pennsylvania, he said, "This was the first campaign that I can recall where my party did not talk about what it always stood for—and that was how to maintain a burgeoning middle class. You didn't hear a single solitary sentence in the last campaign about that guy working on the assembly line making 60,000 bucks a year and a wife making $32,000 as a hostess in a restaurant." In her memoir, Clinton called the criticism "fairly remarkable, considering that Joe himself campaigned for me all over the Midwest and talked plenty about the middle class."

Later that year, in an interview with *Vanity Fair*, Biden assessed her campaign (and perhaps her) as joyless. "Everyone thinks it was just raw ambition on her part," he said. "I think she was sort of a prisoner of history. First woman who had a better-than-even chance of getting the nomination. First woman, relative to the Republican field, who had a better-than-even chance of being president. But there's a lot of baggage, fair and unfair, and there was no illusion on her part—this wasn't going to be a Marquess of Queensberry fight. And so I never got the sense that there was any joy in her campaign. Maybe it's me, but I find joy in doing this."