

1 Crisis? What crisis?

The tax-credit row has put reform of the upper house back on the agenda

The Economist, October 31st, 2015

5 WHEN Benjamin Disraeli was elevated to the House of Lords in 1876, he said: "I am dead: dead, but in the Elysian fields." The chamber has its Elysian touches, with a glittering throne overlooking red-leather benches. Their occupants may not be dead, but they are certainly old: Tory ex-ministers under Margaret Thatcher, former Labour MPs, Liberal grandees and, in a special section, a clutch of Church of England bishops clad in black, white and purple.

10 It seems a strange setting for a constitutional war. Yet that is what the upper house started on October 26th. At issue was a seemingly mundane statutory instrument containing the government's planned cuts to tax credits next April. Four motions were proposed: one to kill it, two to delay it until certain conditions were met and one to accept it with regret. In the end peers voted for the delaying motions. Yet, as the government swiftly pointed out, the effect was to block its plans.

15 The oddity was that little of the debate was about tax credits. Labour's Baroness Hollis tugged heartstrings by reading out letters from poor working people fearful of losing the handouts. The Archbishop of York, John Sentamu, made a strong moral case for not leaving people in the hands of loan sharks. Even Tory peers urged the chancellor, George Osborne, to soften his plans. As Lord Lawson, a former Tory chancellor, put it, "it is not just listening that is required. Change is required."

20 Yet what got the peers most excited was the constitutional question of whether they had a right to interfere. Before the debate, the government said that rejection by the unelected Lords would infringe the prerogative of the elected House of Commons over taxes and spending. The tax-credit cuts, worth £4.4 billion (\$6.7 billion) to the exchequer, are clearly a budgetary matter. Conventions dating to the late 17th century or earlier provide that such matters should be decided by the lower
25 house, which has voted for the cuts no fewer than three times. Lord Butler, a former cabinet secretary, firmly supported this line.

Yet many peers disagreed. They pointed out that a statutory instrument linked to a welfare act was not a money or finance bill, and thus not covered by the 1911 Parliament Act that stops the
30 Lords rejecting such bills. They said the government could have put the changes in a finance bill, but had chosen the sneaky route of a statutory instrument precisely to avoid debate and amendment. And they claimed the Lords had every right to invite the government to think again, especially when many of its own backbench MPs had doubts. Mr Osborne is indeed thinking again.

Talk of a constitutional crisis akin to that of 1909-11 thus seems overblown. Yet the challenge to the elected government's powers is still serious. David Cameron is in the unique position for a Tory
35 prime minister of not commanding a majority in the House of Lords. The Constitution Unit at University College London says that, since May, the government has been defeated 19 times in the upper house. It is no surprise that it should now be threatening to flood the Lords with more Tory peers or clip their wings in some other way.

Mr Cameron has responded to the latest defeats by setting up a review of the House of Lords to
40 stop it blocking budgetary matters. Yet Britain's history is littered with long, painful and mostly failed attempts to reform the upper house. The reason why the Tories have lost their previous majority is that a 1999 reform threw out most (but not all) hereditary peers. But that reform kept the upper house as a very large yet still unelected body.

In 2011 Mr Cameron's coalition government tried to bring in a mostly elected House of Lords.
45 But that measure failed in 2012 after a rebellion by Conservative backbenchers. This year's Tory manifesto declared that reform of the upper house was "not a priority". Yet the government's repeated defeats there, culminating in the latest, constitutionally questionable, rejection of its tax-credit cuts, have put the issue of Lords reform firmly back on the agenda. The nice irony in Mr Cameron's position is that he should have chosen to lead his review of the House of Lords an
50 unelected hereditary peer, Lord Strathclyde.

1 A taste for more

Devolving tax powers benefits Scotland more than the rest of Britain but may do little to keep the union together

The Economist, April 9th, 2016

5 SCOTLAND is fast becoming one of the world's most powerful subnational states, along with Canadian provinces and Swiss cantons. It is now adding significant control over fiscal policy, in particular income tax, to the substantial autonomy it has enjoyed since 1999. The devolution deal, hastily concluded by an alarmed British government when only 55% of Scots voted in 2014 against independence, favours Scottish taxpayers over those in the rest of Britain. Even so it may only
10 whet the appetite for full sovereignty.

Traditionally the British Treasury has collected revenues in Scotland, as elsewhere, and handed the Scottish government a slug of money, the "block grant", to finance most of its spending. On April 6th a new Scottish rate of income tax (SRIT) was introduced that will take ten pence from every pound subject to income taxes. Scottish taxes due to Westminster have been
15 correspondingly reduced. Scotland will keep the revenue from its new tax band, but its grant will be smaller. Next year Scotland will gain full control over income tax, collecting roughly half the money it spends, and the grant will shrink further. Other powers are also being devolved, including more say on welfare spending and the ability to borrow a little more.

It looks like a bad time, however, for Scotland to assume control of its fiscal destiny. The effects
20 of lower world prices for oil and gas, exports of which accounted for one-quarter of Scotland's GDP in 2012, may worsen in 2016, as contracts for fabricating and maintaining oil rigs expire and are not renewed. Forthcoming revisions could show that the Scottish economy contracted in the fourth quarter of 2015.

In the area around Inverness, Scotland's biggest oil region after Aberdeen, unemployment has
25 risen for five straight months. The Port of Cromarty Firth, where rigs are stored when they are not needed in the North Sea, is jammed. Diversifying into renewable energy and tourism will not offset job losses in oil. Pay packets in the industry are about 50% above the British average, so having fewer to tax takes a big bite out of receipts

The fine print of the devolution agreement should help the Scots to cope with a slowing economy,
30 however. The British government cut Scotland a sweet deal. Though the Scottish government is now in charge of a chunk of income tax, it will not run any economic risk in 2016-17, says Jim Gallagher of Oxford University. The reduction in the block grant will exactly offset the tax receipts generated this year by SRIT, he says. If revenues are low, London will make up the difference.

Scotland will take on much more risk when it gets full control over income tax in April 2017, but
35 the fine print of the deal may still mitigate it. Scotland's income-tax take in 2016-17 will help to determine how big a block grant it receives thereafter. If the economy performs badly this year, the grant next year will be more generous. If growth then bounces back, Scotland could find itself with both juicy tax receipts and a hefty handout from London.

The way in which the block grant will be adjusted in future years is also to Scotland's advantage.
40 Its population is growing much more slowly than Britain's. Revenues from income tax can be expected to grow more slowly too, and so can demand for public services.

Some argue that any adjustment to the block grant should take into account Scotland's diminishing need for cash relative to needs elsewhere in Britain. In fact its budget will be protected from its relatively lower population growth—precisely what the ruling Scottish National Party (SNP)
45 was aiming for in the negotiations over devolution. Public spending per person in Scotland is already more than 10% higher than it is in Britain as a whole, though Scotland is not particularly impoverished. The deal ensures that it is unlikely to decline toward the British average, says Mr Gallagher.

This latest round of devolution comes at an interesting time. The government at Holyrood is
50 controlled by the SNP, which advocates independence, lost the referendum on it and went on to stunning victory in the British general election in 2015. It now hopes to do as well in the Scottish elections scheduled for May 5th. [...]

1 Events, events

Lessons from an unhappy few weeks for the prime minister
The Economist, April 16th, 2016

SELDOM has there been so striking a confirmation of the old reply by Harold Macmillan, a one-time Tory prime minister, when he was asked what causes governments most trouble: "Events, dear boy, events." David Cameron, now Tory prime minister, has been buffeted by a series of events, ranging from an ill-received budget to a steel crisis to (this week) a scandal over his culture secretary and a prostitute.

The trickiest, however, was a row over his own taxes that began with the revelation in the "Panama papers" that Mr Cameron's late father had set up an offshore unit trust called Blairmore from which family members had benefited. Mr Cameron and his advisers handled the news with extraordinary maladroitness, insisting at first that it was a private matter and only slowly dripping out further information. It did not matter that, as the prime minister told the House of Commons on April 11th, he had paid full British taxes on his drawing from Blairmore, that it was set up offshore for administrative reasons rather than to avoid tax, or that he had sold his holdings before taking office. The mere words offshore and trust were enough to evoke images of rich people not paying their fair whack.

Although he seems to have done nothing wrong, Mr Cameron could partly blame himself. Four years ago he criticised Jimmy Carr, a comedian, for equally legal tax avoidance. This came back to haunt him when, after the Blairmore story, he released a summary of his tax returns for the past six years and revealed that his mother had given him £200,000 (\$280,000) that is likely to escape inheritance tax. His decision to publish his returns led George Osborne, his chancellor, Boris Johnson, mayor of London, and Jeremy Corbyn, the Labour leader, to do so as well (yielding the discovery that Mr Corbyn was fined £100 for late filing).

The pressure is now on other public figures to follow suit. There is even talk of publishing all tax returns online, as in Norway. One Tory backbencher, Jacob Rees-Mogg, predicted sadly that all MPs would have to publish their tax returns before long. Their reputation for financial chicanery has not recovered from the parliamentary expenses scandal of a few years ago. Another Tory MP, Alan Duncan, spoke crassly when he warned that the House of Commons might soon be filled only by "low achievers", but the fear that too much transparency could put talented people off public life is real enough.

The political problem for Mr Cameron and Mr Osborne is not really about taxes at all. It is the confirmation of the widespread notion that they are posh boys from privileged and wealthy backgrounds who are out of touch with ordinary folk. Mr Corbyn struck a chord this week when he spoke of one rule for the super-rich and another for everybody else. A common perception ever since the financial crisis is that the government is trying to balance its budget on the backs of the poor, the disabled and the young while protecting the rich and the old. It was borne out when Iain Duncan Smith resigned in March as work and pensions secretary, complaining that Britons were "not all in it together".

This perception of Mr Cameron as one who seeks always to look after his own is not quite correct: his party conference speech in October was an admirably sincere attack on the deep unfairness and inequalities that disfigure British society. But it is making it harder for him to command support, even among his own backbenchers. Ungrateful Tories seem to have forgotten that it was Mr Cameron who, less than a year ago, pulled off an unexpected election victory and that the economy is steaming ahead, with the employment rate at a record high.

Underlying almost all Mr Cameron's political woes is the June 23rd referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union, the official campaigning for which began this week. The combination of a tiny government majority in the Commons, a relatively strong economy and the ineffectiveness of Mr Corbyn as Labour leader is giving Eurosceptic Tory backbenchers more freedom to make trouble. They reason that, since the Conservatives are bound to win the next election anyway, there is nothing for the party to fear from splits or rebellions. The talk in Westminster is now of a big cabinet reshuffle or even of a leadership challenge after the referendum. In any event, since Mr Cameron has said he will not run again in 2020, the political agenda will move on to open debate over his successor. [...]

1 Donald Trump's nightmare

Sadiq Khan's win in London was a victory for enlightened, grown-up indifference
The Economist, Bagehot, May 14th 2016

5 EVENTUALLY, every senior politician in Britain is invited to Buckingham Palace to join the Privy Council, the body that notionally advises the queen. In 2009 Sadiq Khan, then transport minister, was asked on which version of the Bible he wanted to swear his oath. He replied that, as a Muslim, he would like to use a Koran. Buckingham Palace had none, so he brought his own. Afterwards, when the palace tried to return it, he asked: "Can I leave it here for the next person?"

10 On May 5th Londoners voted to make Mr Khan their mayor. Except for the direct vote for the Portuguese and French presidents, he thus holds the biggest personal mandate in Europe. His landslide over the Conservatives (he took 57% of the vote to 43% for Zac Goldsmith, his posh Tory rival) was a rebuke to hardliners of all sorts. At a stroke it became harder for Islamic State's recruiters to tour public housing estates in Europe and convince young Muslims from immigrant backgrounds that they have no place in the liberal West. The de facto capital of that liberal West had just entrusted its future to a mosque-going, gay-marriage-supporting, proudly Muslim family man with precisely such a hinterland.

15 His win was also a rebuke to Western nativists like Donald Trump and Nigel Farage, the leader of the UK Independence Party. It gave the lie to the nonsense spouted by visitors to Europe who see a woman wearing a niqab and assume the continent is under sharia law. Mr Trump announced on May 10th that Mr Khan would be exempt from his putative entry ban on non-American Muslims, which he then called "just a suggestion". London's mayor rejected the exemption: "This isn't just about me. It's about my friends, my family and everyone who comes from a background similar to mine, anywhere in the world." Within days he had used the guff about "Londonistan" and "Eurabia" to become a global symbol of tolerance and religious pluralism.

20 Bagehot first crossed paths with Mr Khan almost a decade ago on the south London political scene, and long saw him in terms of the internal politics of the Labour Party: as a typical social democrat who, more ideologically flexible than most, had settled on the party's centre-left at a time when, after a decade of liberal-right dominance under Tony Blair, that was trendy. On the terraced Victorian streets of SW16, Mr Khan was just "Sadiq", the guy from the neighbouring constituency; the machine politician who had made Tooting—a mix of hard-up estates and comfortable suburbs—relatively safe for Labour when a lesser practitioner might have lost it to the Conservatives.

30 Mr Khan's win on May 5th was truer to the MP-next-door that Bagehot knows than to the cosmopolitan emblem—or hardline Muslim—of global headlines. And therein lies the real hammer-blow to the Trumps and Farages. For the opposite of nativist populism is not hyper-liberalism but a battle for the epithet of "pragmatist". It is a struggle over the sort of voter who simply yawns at grunting caveman obsessions about who is part of the tribe; about who belongs and who does not. The ultimate rebuke to a Trump rally is not the protest outside it but the citizen who strolls past, neither appalled nor enthused, and carries on with his life. Where once, "progressive" meant raising your fist, now it means shrugging your shoulders.

35 London's election was strikingly normal. The capital is a conventional Labour city and Mr Khan a conventional Labour politician. His win was merely the natural order of things. Mr Goldsmith's hints about his rival's links with reactionary Muslims—which in defter hands might have raised valid questions about Mr Khan's willingness to flex his principles to suit his electorate—looked crass and crazed. They had little effect. More interested in Mr Khan's pledge to let them change buses without paying extra fares, Londoners rolled their eyes, voted Labour and inadvertently made history. To veterans of the capital's politics the most interesting thing was not the election of a Muslim but the signs that Mr Khan did better than Labour usually does among white suburbanites and that Mr Goldsmith (despite his best efforts) benefited from the ongoing structural rise in the non-white Tory vote.

45 According to Sunder Katwala of British Future, a think-tank, Mr Khan's achievement alludes to the "depolarisation" of society. It will be judged on how he uses it. As mayor he has few big policy levers to pull. Talking to Bagehot before the election, he insisted that he wanted to strengthen these. That is encouraging: devolution is to be welcomed. But the greatest impact he could have as mayor would be further to normalise his initial achievement. On that, the signs are as good as they could be: as one generation gives way to the next, and non-white Britons move out of the cities and into the suburbs, ever more British voters use civic factors (social and political behaviour) rather than ethnic ones (family roots and race) to define their national identity. [...]

1 How the Brexit referendum has infantilised British politics

Politicians like Boris are not characters in a fantasy show. If they aspire to high office then they must be held to high standards.

By Tom Railton, *The New Statesman*, May 27th, 2016

5 Ancient Greece is the cradle of modern Europe. From its primordial soup emerged so much of our culture, our language and our politics. Of the three, it seems to be the politics that has made the least progress over the centuries. In fact, if you dropped an Athenian into the middle of politics in the UK today, they would find themselves right at home. This is not because of the direct democracy, the demagogues or the xenophobia, though all are worryingly familiar, but because of
10 the style of the debate itself.

To understand politics in ancient Greece you have to grasp that they had no concept of 'the truth'. This is not to say that they were liars, simply that the framework by which we judge credibility was not one they would have recognised. The myths and legends that dominated their discourse were neither thought of as being 'true' or 'made-up', they simply *were*, and the fact of their being
15 known allowed them to be used as reference points for debate and argument.

Modern politics seems to be sliding back towards this infant state, and nothing embodies this more than the childish slanging match that passes for an EU referendum debate. In the past six years the UK has had three great exercises of direct democracy and it is safe to say none of the campaigns have added a great deal to sum of human enlightenment. Who remembers the claims
20 that babies would die as a result of the special voting machines needed to conduct AV elections? But the EU referendum has taken this to new extremes. The In campaign are executing what is a fairly predictable strategy, the kind of thing that is normal fare in politics these days. Dossiers of doomsday scenarios. Experts wheeled out. Statistics embellished to dazzle the public. One can question the exact accuracy, but at least you feel they operate within certain parameters of veracity.
25

What is happening on the Out side, in contrast, is the collective nervous breakdown of a large section of the political establishment. Just this week we have had Penny Mordaunt, a government minister, flat-out denying the UK's right to veto new accessions to the EU. We have seen the fiercely independent Institute for Fiscal Studies denounced as a propaganda arm for Brussels.
30 Most bizarrely, Boris Johnson even tried to claim that the EU had banned bananas from being sold in bunches larger than three, something that nobody who has actually visited a shop in the UK could possibly believe. These kind of claims stretch our political discourse way beyond the crudely drawn boundaries of factual accuracy that normally constrain what politicians can do and say. Surely the people peddling these myths can never be taken seriously again?

35 But they will. You just watch as Johnson, Mordaunt and the rest slide effortlessly back into public life. Instead of being ridiculed for their unhinged statements, they will be rewarded with plush offices and ministerial cars. Journalists will continue to hang on every word they say. Their views will be published in newspapers, their faces will flit ceaselessly across our TV screens. Johnson is even touted as a plausible future leader of our country, possibly before the year is out. A man who
40 over his meandering career seems to have held every possible opinion on any topic you care to name. Or rather, perhaps it is more accurate to say that the character we call Boris has no opinions at all, simply interests. The public, who have scant regard for a political class they believe to be untrustworthy, seem to have taken a shine to a man who is perhaps the most fundamentally dishonest of Westminster's denizens.

45 What does all this say about the state of our politics? If it is true that we are seeing the advent of 'post-truth' politics, as some have argued, then it has grown out of the corrosive relationship between politicians and the public. It is both a great irony and a great tragedy that the very fact that people distrust all politicians is what has permitted the most opportunistic to peddle more and more outlandish claims. Political discourse has ceased to be a rational debate with agreed parameters
50 and, like the ancient Greeks, more resembles a series of competing myths. Claims are assessed not by their accuracy but by their place in the grand narrative which is politics.

But the truth matters. For the ancients it was the historian Thucydides who shifted the dial decisively in favour of fact over fiction. In writing his *Histories* he decided that he wanted to know what actually happened, not just what made a good story. In a similar vein British politics needs to
55 take a step back towards the real world. [...]

1 Why are schools trying to wipe out regional accents?

The news that trainee teachers are being encouraged to adopt a more middle-class accent is part of a worrying trend

Lynsey Hanley, *The Guardian*, May 16th, 2016

5 Call it the "Downton effect", or the return of old-fashioned regional snobbery, but there is, increasingly, one acceptable way to be in society, and that is to be middle class and from the south-east of England. When you actually live in the north, the "northern powerhouse" is self-evidently nothing but a nice-sounding phrase, delivered in RP by someone who does not.

10 As if further proof were needed that the dominance of middle-class values and identity is becoming more powerful, the linguistics researcher Alexander Baratta has reported that trainee teachers from the north and Midlands are being asked by their supervisors to lose their regional accents in order to be better "role models" for schoolchildren.

15 What he terms "linguistic prejudice" is essentially another form of class prejudice: northern accents, in particular, are perceived to be exclusively working class, with scouse accents firmly at the bottom of the value scale. A couple of months back, casting agents for a new Morrisons advert put out a call for "proper working-class people" – by which they meant people with northern accents – to appear in the campaign, but with the firm instruction: "Nobody from Liverpool, please." Teacher trainees from Leicester, Nottingham and Eccles interviewed by Baratta were variously told to "go back where [they] came from" if they were to be understood by their pupils, that they needed to learn to "speak properly" – in other words, without a regional accent – and that their pronunciation was "too common".

20 It provides further evidence that teachers are being inducted – institutionalised – into an education system designed to produce, essentially, identical types of people. People with identical accents, communication styles and methods of personal presentation are well primed to work in the private sector, to earn above the median, and to compete for work on the basis of not being different, but of simply being better at doing exactly the same thing.

25 Becoming socially mobile, in the narrow sense defined by the government's own Commission on Social Mobility, is simply a matter of someone from a non-professional background getting into the professions. Take a rough diamond, polish it and send it back out into the world more economically productive than before: job's a good 'un. Such simplistic logic denies the experience of social mobility, which for many people – as revealed by the subjects of Baratta's study – involves being asked to change fundamental aspects of who they are in exchange for achieving their ambition.

30 Schoolchildren interviewed by the education researcher Diane Reay noted how such forms of snobbery are passed down, from teacher trainer to teacher, from teacher to pupil. "Some teachers act as if the child is stupid because they've got a posh accent," said one pupil, "Kenny". "I think telling you a different way [of speaking] is sort of good, but I think the way they do it isn't good because they correct you and make you look stupid."

35 Kenny's not daft: he realises the importance of clear communication, and is aware that being given the chance to acquire some of the skills of the dominant class may go on to serve him better than a well-meaning teacher who pretends such things don't matter. What he resents is the implication that to sound working class is automatically to sound stupid.

40 As aspects of culture become more centralised and focused on London, it stands to reason that the "dominant person" – the person who is valued most, who is viewed as the most civilised – happens to be middle class and to speak in a standardised south-eastern accent. It's the northern museums that are closing, the northern councils that have to prioritise adult care over libraries and parks because they can't afford both. The BBC's 5 Live and CBeebies channels may have moved to Salford, but you'd never guess it from the accents of its presenters.

45 The sociolinguist Peter Trudgill noted as long ago as the 1970s that language use had begun to change, and to some extent to level out, in smaller towns due to the undue influence of larger, more culturally dominant cities. But this is clearly not the sort of natural linguistic levelling that is brought about by people moving around more often. The urge to devalue regional accents is part of a deliberate process. We're all being taught that the only acceptable role model – intelligent, authoritative, responsible – is now a middle-class one.

- 1 Never mind a level playing field – private education is guarded by an electric fence**
Employers are told to spot 'potential not polish', but polish is about the tiny, monstrous ways that class functions – deliberately baffling to outsiders
Suzanne Moore, *The Guardian*, June 1st, 2016
- 5 Everyone stop being horrible to posh people! It's not their fault they have everything. It's the fault of the schools they went to. I blame the parents. They refuel the class system by sending their offspring to private schools because they are not entirely daft. As a mechanism for maintaining privilege, private education, with its gated communities of the elite, simply works. It has worked through thick and thin. Its pupils may be both.
- 10 That 7% figure of people who are privately educated, and who run just about everything, has stalled. Sometimes, people like me squawk about it but, as I have never learned to talk proper, it's dismissed as "the politics of envy", an idiotic phrase that reduces justified politics to a personal grudge. Occasionally, though, one of the gilded boys has a go at levelling the playing field. They do love a playing field.
- 15 So here we have cabinet minister Matt Hancock (King's) suggesting that employers check the socio-economic backgrounds of applicants to stop the 93% of us who did not go to private school being discriminated against. Don't people put their schools down on their CVs anyway? Wouldn't it be easier to ask applicants if they knew much about skiing and refuse to interview anyone who did?
- 20 Still, Hancock's vapid suggestion was enough to cause Lord Waldegrave, provost of Eton, to have a meltdown and complain that the privately educated could be discriminated against. The poor babies. How they bawl, not when the playing field is level but when anyone ventures near its electric fence.
- 25 All this came about as part of Cameron's "life chances" agenda, some sort of baleful drivel about enhancing social mobility. It is patently obvious that social mobility does not start at a job interview but long before it. When employers are told to spot "potential not polish", we may ask where on the periodic table this mysterious element "polish" appears.
- 30 I have never been able to locate it, that's for sure. The idea that the existing system can be levelled out by allowing a few escapees from the lower orders into the public school milieu of law, politics, media, academia, judiciary and the City is somewhat cack-handed. For polish is surely about the tiny, monstrous ways that class functions, a series of codes and signals that enable small gangs of people to recognise each other as clubbable, employable, breedable.
- 35 It is deliberately baffling to outsiders. When I first started working in the media I was astonished at how everyone seemed to know each other from college. Then I began to realise they had been in schools with "houses", small class sizes and peculiar sports, and shared the assumption that everything that came out of their mouths was innately fascinating.
- 40 On a Radio 4 show, I heard a producer bemoan my "polytechnic accent". At every meeting I would feel unwashed and somewhat dazed, however long I had spent getting ready. Class manifests as acute discomfort. It's not about thinking a Findus Crispy Pancake is a nice dinner, it is shared assumptions about what matters.
- 45 Lynsey Hanley's book *Respectable* charts extremely well her journey into the middle class and all the anxiety it produces. But it bears little relationship to my journey, because there are many different working-class cultures.
- 50 What is shared, though, is that to be working class in a middle-class environment requires you to learn certain codes, and once you learn a code you can deconstruct it. The condescending nature of all the guff on private school education is part of this code. This system produces the brightest and the best, if the brightest and the best means booming confidence, inflexible thinking and the regurgitation of specific histories. Thus we have a chancellor who, without studying economics, believes himself an expert on it, whatever the figures say, whatever renowned economists say. Private schools sell self-belief.
- 55 In working-class culture, self-belief is played out as bravado and different kinds of knowledge are valued. I don't romanticise it, as it's stultifying. Everything is about what can be shown: practical skills, big tellies, getting really dressed up. What can't be shown, that which is abstract, is not to be dwelt on, so I am forever glad I got away.
- 60 Social mobility, though, involves living with restraint. One must bite one's tongue in order not to bite the hand that feeds you. Do not be prejudiced against your superiors. Just accept they got into Oxbridge by dint of their brainiac qualities. It was simply handy that, while you spent your teenage years sitting on a wall, they were competing in debating societies, editing their own magazine or playing the harp.
- 65 Here is the mystical polish. Sadly the self-improving element of the working class beloved by the likes of Raymond Williams, enacted through evening classes and further education, has been killed dead. So, instead we have the engineers of social class suggesting they pull a few of us on to the lifeboats. It is no real answer. [...]

1 DIY schooling on the rise as more parents opt for home education

No one knows exactly how many children are being taught at home, but new figures suggest numbers in England are growing. Why is this?

The Guardian, April 12th, 2016

5 For Marta Drew and her family, it was a difficult decision, but the right one. Eight years ago, she says, her seven-year-old son had been complaining about school. "Christopher, who was a bright, curious little boy, started saying things like 'I hate learning' and 'learning is boring'. So I started reading up about home education.

10 "Initially my husband thought I was out of my mind. But he read up about it, too, and within three months we had decided to take our children out of infant school. We have enjoyed it enormously."

Drew, who supervises the increasingly self-directed learning of Christopher, now 15, and his sister, Alicja, 13, from the family base near Reigate, Surrey, is a former marketing account manager. She gave up her job when Christopher was born, had a part-time business selling jewellery when her children were infants but then gave that up to home educate. Her husband, Martin, a graphic
15 designer, remains the breadwinner, commuting to London, but is an active supporter of activities outside work hours, such as football for Christopher and drama for Alicja.

Drew says the children's learning was more directly provided by her when the children were young. Now, she works out their weekly study schedule – which is supplemented by online tutoring through organisations such as MyTutorWeb and sports and cultural activities – and largely lets
20 them get on with it.

The Drews are seemingly part of a fast-growing trend towards home education. Nobody knows exactly how many children are being educated at home because many parents are under no obligation to tell the authorities. But freedom of information responses provided to Education
25 Guardian indicate numbers are rising. Responses from 134 of England's 153 local education authorities list 30,298 children as receiving home education in 2014-15. Of these, 13,007 are of primary age, and 17,291 of them are between 11 and 16.

Among 103 authorities that provided data back to 2011-12, the number of primary-age children recorded as home educated rose by 60% in the three academic years to 2014-15. In the secondary phase, the increase was 37%.

30 In some of England's largest local authority areas, hundreds of young people are being home educated: Kent listed 1,285 children; Essex, 1,234; Norfolk, 1,052; and Lancashire, 918. About 85% of local authorities documented a rise in home education over those three years, with 27 authorities reporting a doubling of numbers.

This may be part of a longer trend. Last December, the BBC reported home education numbers
35 had risen 65% across England and Wales in the six years to 2014-15, while in 2007, Channel 4 News documented a 61% increase in home educated children in the five years from 2002.

Pinning down reasons for the rise is tricky. Eleanor Reardon, who set up a legal advocacy service for home educators three years ago, says parents have various motivations. "They tell us:
40 'I cannot get my child into a school locally. The local authority has said I have to send them however many miles away, so I am considering home education.' Or 'My child has been sick', or 'My child has special needs, but the school is threatening to fine me or take me to court because he's not been in school.'" And, more recently, "There has also been a huge rise in special educational needs cases which are not being catered for," she says.

45 Reardon and other home education experts say part of the rise may not relate to schools. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 introduced a requirement for local authorities to identify children not receiving school education. This is likely to have triggered more systematic record-keeping.

50 In 2009, a review of home education for the Labour government by the former children's services director Graham Badman prompted media coverage, meaning, says Reardon, that more parents became aware of the possibility of home education. The rise of social media has also helped to alert parents to the possibility of home education and to provide support networks.

Although the proportion of people home educating is still low – our figures indicate it accounts for 0.5% of the total pupil population – some within the field suggest the numbers make an interesting commentary on perceived weaknesses of English education policy.

55 Elizabeth Lil, a former science teacher and musician who recently moved to St Andrews in Scotland having home educated her two children in London and Bedfordshire, says some parents are rejecting the pressure they feel pupils are being put under in schools. "The testing [in schools], and all of the target-setting, only suits a proportion of the pupil population," she says. "A lot of children are being put off education too early because of the literacy requirements. It's particularly
60 bad for boys, who are not always disposed to sit still for long periods." [...]

1 Thousands died to earn your right to vote – now you must exercise it

The only cure for the parlous state of our democracy is for reasonable people to participate whenever they are asked, and ensure that voter turnout is congruent with the scale of the question put to them

5 *The Independent*, editorial, June 6th, 2016

Tuesday night is the deadline for you to register to vote in the referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union, which takes place on June 23. If you are not yet registered, *The Independent* implores you to do so today, and to make your voice heard in our fragile democracy, whichever way you choose to vote on the future direction of this country.

10 Throughout the nearly three decades since we were launched as a newspaper, this institution has done more than any of our rivals to stand up for democracy, and to highlight the manifold threats to it.

15 We have campaigned vigorously for reform of Britain's ludicrous, anachronistic, and deeply unjust voting system. We have chronicled the evolution of the Lords from reasonably functional second chamber to a monstrously over-bloated and venal place which is nothing short of corrupt (after all, you can buy your way into it, one of the most embarrassing things about being British today).

20 We have argued the case for a radical and brave approach to free speech, in defiance of the willingness of censors and minorities to promote a victimhood mentality in claiming to be offended at the slightest provocation to their ideology or superstition. And, with our tinge of republicanism, disdain for the aristocracy, and distaste for the expanding and unaccountable power of unelected bureaucrats, we have done our utmost to give meaning to the phrase 'power to the people'.

It is in this very spirit that we ask that you ensure you are registered to vote today.

25 This editorial is not an endorsement of one side or another in the debate. That said, it is true that those on the Remain side are more worried about turnout, and therefore doing their best to encourage voters who they fear are lazy to get into the ballot box. But given the central pillar of the argument made for Brexit, by those who espouse that position is the importance of democracy, they too must presumably be in favour of high participation rates by an awakened electorate.

30 Ironically, the EU referendum has shown very clearly why calling referendums is often dangerous and counter-productive. This may seem a surprising, or even counter-intuitive, position for democrats. If you want to give power to the people, why not trust them to vote on the big questions? The past few months has provided ample evidence.

35 Referendums have the capacity to paralyse government. Every day that the likes of Cameron, Gove, Osborne and Boris Johnson are campaigning on the EU is a day they're not, for instance, fighting to improve education for the poor. Referendums also allow fringe parties and interests an avenue into the mainstream, where they often don't belong – especially if turnout is low. And, as *The Economist* argued recently, "because referendums treat each issue in isolation, they allow voters to ignore the trade-offs inherent in policy choices and can thus render government incoherent."

40 But, having been called, it is incumbent upon all citizens to participate in this referendum, if only to maximise the chance that mainstream views come to the fore, and extreme views don't gain unjustified sway. That is why we ask you to make sure you are registered.

45 British democracy is in a parlous state. Aside from our broken electoral system and farcical Lords, the weakness of Labour means we effectively have one-party government in England and Scotland, with all the shameless gerrymandering that comes with it. The only cure is for reasonable people to participate whenever they are asked, and ensure that voter turnout is congruent with the scale of the question being asked, whether in a General Election or in a plebiscite such as this.

Within living memory, thousands died so that you may put a cross on a piece of paper in a ballot box. We won't betray them. Will you?

1 The Conservatives aren't really split on Europe – the rift runs much deeper

The rejection of pragmatic centrism for ideological purity has hamstrung one of this country's great parties, and now the other is at serious risk

David Siesage, *The Independent*, Voices, June 6th 2016

5 When the heady days of the referendum are behind us, there will be a reckoning for the Conservative Party. Words have been uttered that will not easily be forgotten. Old friends have turned foes, and the peaceable amity brought by power has disintegrated. But it was ever thus, for the rift within the Tories is not about Europe but about the party's old struggle with itself: to stay true to its roots, or to modernise with the country it seeks to lead.

10 David Cameron may have hoped to avoid blue-on-blue attacks by calling a referendum on Europe, the party's flashpoint, but those hopes have been dashed. A Tory civil war is now playing out in television studios every Sunday morning.

15 Last month it turned nasty, as Tory backbenchers began to prepare for a post-referendum leadership coup. Nadine Dorries described her prime minister as "toast"; Andrew Bridgen said Cameron was "finished" regardless of the result. One anonymous MP even spoke of wanting to stab Cameron in the front, "so I can see the expression on his face". The "bastards" of John Major's nightmares were back with a vengeance.

20 Fittingly, it was Major himself who returned fire for the Remain camp. Appearing on the Andrew Marr Show yesterday he took aim at Vote Leave, calling its campaign "squalid" and "deceitful", and branding Boris Johnson a "court jester".

Johnson was surprisingly conciliatory in response, but the die has long been cast: Cameron is in danger after June 23.

25 It is often said that he who wields the knife shall never wear the crown – and thank God for that. The prospect of fringe figures such as Bridgen or Dorries leading the party would remind even the staunchest Brexiteer of Cameron's merits. Perhaps their comments can be dismissed as the predictable views of the usual cranks.

But their words remind us of the broader split within the party. Many on the Conservative right have never trusted Cameron. They reluctantly went along with his modernisation programme, hoping it was more tactical than profound, but were always suspicious of his Conservative credentials.

30 They grumbled about his early focus on climate change. They raged over same sex marriage. They even produced an 'Alternative Queen's Speech' in 2013, containing proposals to ban the burqa, privatise the BBC and bring back capital punishment. The Prime Minister's desire to remain in the EU is, for this eternal faction, the straw that broke the dinosaur's back.

35 By holding a referendum, rather than healing the wound, Cameron has presented his opponents with the perfect opportunity to rip him apart. James Cleverly, a Tory MP campaigning for Leave, conceded as much. "A small number of people on the Brexit side who have never reconciled themselves to Cameron's leadership are using this as a proxy war against their leader," he said.

40 In the ceaseless Tory war between modernisers and traditionalists, the Brexiteers fall largely into the latter group. They see Cameron as a sell-out who has squandered their years in government on wishy-washy liberalism. The same politicians who now claim a Brexit would help fully fund the NHS and plays a greater hand in international development are those who have long disparaged the Prime Minister for addressing such issues in the first place.

45 Never mind that Cameron is the first sitting Prime Minister to win an increased majority in a century. Forget, too, that it was his modern brand of Conservatism that returned the party to power after 13 bleak years in opposition.

Logic and reason play only a walk-on part in this battle. Whatever the result of the referendum, many Brexiteers will want him gone after 23 June. And in his place, many will desire a so-called "proper Conservative".

50 We have seen this approach take hold elsewhere: the argument that Cameron is not really a Conservative is echoed on the hard left, among those who accused Tony Blair of being a "red Tory". It's a dangerous path to tread.

The Conservative Party, like Labour, is made up of diverse philosophical strands: from libertarians to One Nationers to the harrumphing quasi-Ukip fringe. But if the party allows itself to be overrun by a narrow sect that eschews all but true believers, it will go the way of Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party.

55 Lord Blake, an eminent Conservative historian, wrote that a "stern, unbending" ideology had "never paid dividends" to the party. If the British political system is to avoid a complete internal collapse, the Tories must remember this when Cameron finally departs. The rejection of pragmatic centrism for ideological purity has already hamstrung one of this country's great parties – we mustn't allow the other to fall to the same fate.

4 Topple the Cecil Rhodes statue? Better to rebrand him a war criminal

The Rhodes Must Fall campaign is not anti-history. But the argument should be less about statues and more about whether we continue to ignore colonial atrocities.

David Olusoga – *The Guardian*, January 7th, 2016

- 5 If one of the leaders of apartheid-era South Africa thinks you're wrong then the chances are you're probably on the right side of history. The opposition of FW de Klerk to the campaign for the removal of a statue of Cecil Rhodes from Oxford University's Oriel College will be of no surprise to the students leading the British incarnation of the Rhodes Must Fall movement. For the past few weeks their campaign has been patronised, ridiculed and repeatedly misrepresented by politicians and commentators, both here and abroad.

Those opposed to the movement have been busy compiling and disseminating a dodgy dossier of Cecil Rhodes's less disturbing quotations, which they hope demonstrates the "positive side" of his legacy. The supporters of Rhodes Must Fall, meanwhile, have been engaged in the far easier task of selecting, from a strong field, the worst of his many racist and white supremacist utterances.

- 15 However, the problem with this approach is that the issue with Rhodes is not his toxic words but his murderous actions. Rhodes was a man who launched wars of aggression: he unleashed a paramilitary police force that annexed territory, terrorised civilians, killed thousands of Africans, and stripped thousands more of their land and their rights. He drove Africans on to black reserves and was the historical midwife of the apartheid system, of which FW de Klerk was the undertaker.

- 20 Cecil Rhodes was not some armchair colonialist who knocked out a couple of racist pamphlets. Rhodes was a killer. If he were alive today he would be in a cell at The Hague awaiting trial, charged not with saying nasty things about black people but with war crimes; and none of his more humanitarian statements, nor his undoubted philanthropy, would be admissible in mitigation.

- 25 Beyond mining his letters for benign soundbites, the stock tactic of Rhodes Must Fall's opponents has been to suggest that statements we today find uncomfortable were merely reflecting the views of their age. They say the morals of the 1890s, or indeed the 1980s, cannot be judged "by the standards of today" – which is of course entirely true. Except that Rhodes's views were not universal at the time. He was reviled and condemned by sections of the late Victorian public and by parts of the British press, including the *Guardian*: some regarded his appalling actions as a stain on Britain's reputation.

- 30 It was always inevitable that once the Rhodes Must Fall movement emerged in South Africa it would, sooner or later, land in Oxford University, where Rhodes studied and to which he left an enormous bequest from the vast fortune he had ripped from Africa. But the movement is best understood as part of a global trend in which statues and memorials to soldiers of empire, slave traders or defenders of slavery are being exposed and opposed by the descendants of their victims. We are perhaps better able and more willing to take a clear view of the underlying arguments and emotions when the history being recessed is not our own.

- 35 For example, few people in Britain would find it difficult to see why the flag of the pro-slavery Confederacy is an insensitive symbol to fly in a country that is home to 42 million black people. But it was only after the church shooting in Charleston, South Carolina, last June that Carolinians – a third of whom are the descendants of slaves – and their legislators found it possible to hold a proper discussion over whether it is really right that the flag should fly above their statehouse, or if African Americans should be expected to live under the shadows of statues to slave-owning, Confederate commanders or the founders of the Ku Klux Klan – two groups that often overlap like a Venn diagram.

- 40 A less recent example concerns the fate of dozens of statues to various heroes of Prussian history that once lined the Tiergarten in Berlin. In 1947 the British occupying forces decided that those memorials, though not commissioned by the Nazis but by Kaiser Wilhelm II, were so contaminated by Prussian militarism that they had to be not just toppled but dynamited. They were in fact saved and secretly buried. Today they stand unceremoniously jumbled together in the grounds of the Spandau fortress. If the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, were to suddenly decide to reinstate the Tiergarten statues it is likely that there would be an outcry across Europe, not least in Britain. This is because we acknowledge that there are aspects of German history – and not just the history of the Third Reich – that should not be uncritically celebrated or memorialised. But we have long tended to exempt ourselves from the process of historical self-analysis we expect from other nations.

- 45 The Rhodes Must Fall movement has been accused of being anti-history, of wanting to whitewash Rhodes and the British empire out of our history. I suspect students who have committed three years of their lives to full-time study, putting themselves tens of thousands of pounds into debt for the privilege, tend not to be ideologically opposed to the acquisition of knowledge. [...]

1 Teaching children fundamental British values is act of 'cultural supremacism'
Members of National Union of Teachers union also call on promotion of policies to allow more migrants and refugees into Britain
By Javier Espinoza, Education Editor, *The Telegraph*, 28 March 2016

- 5 Teaching children fundamental British values is an act of "cultural supremacism", teachers have said, as members of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) vote to replace the concept with one that includes "international rights".
- A legal duty on teachers to promote so-called British values was passed two years ago after the "Trojan Horse" controversy.
- 10 However, teachers argue "fundamental British values" set an "inherent cultural supremacism, particularly in the context of multicultural schools and the wider picture of migration".
- The motion, which was passed at the NUT's annual conference in Brighton, also calls for a campaign to promote "policies that welcome migrants and refugees into Britain" and called on members to "gather and collate materials on migrants and refugees" to be used in schools.
- 15 Following the motion, teachers were accused of looking to play "the role of fifth columnists" and that they risked making children feel guilty about being British.
- The motion said migrants make a "huge economic, political and social contribution to the country" and condemned the Prime Minister for "racial stereotyping".
- 20 Michel Holland, a teacher from Lambeth, said: "I am the grandson of Irish refugees. We're all refugees in this country." He added: "Refugees are welcome here."
- Christopher Denson, a teacher from Coventry, said he had reservations about using the term "fundamental British values" in schools because many of his students had ancestry in countries which had been at the mercy British colonialism.
- 25 He said: "The inherent cultural supremacism in that term is both unnecessary and unacceptable. And seen with the Prevent agenda, it belies the most thinly veiled racism and a conscious effort to divide communities."
- He added: "It's our duty to push a real anti-racist work in all schools. And that doesn't mean talk of tolerating other's views, but genuine, inclusive anti-racist work."
- 30 He said every year his school discussed topics such as apartheid and the rise of Islamophobia. He added: "This year we focussed on the migrant crisis in Calais, the Mediterranean and beyond.
- "We organised a politics day for Year 8s in the week before Easter. They had a day to form a political party in their tutor groups to come up with a manifesto, film a broadcast, and make banners and take part in a debate.
- 35 "Apart from the quality of the work, the other thing that really made my proud was that every single tutor group had as a policy, 'refugees welcome, open the borders'."
- He said: "We need to be pushing at every level for anti-racism to be in the core curriculum for every child. We need to continue to gather, collate and publicise such materials and we need to fight to reject this notion of British values, to fight for notions of human values and human rights.
- 40 "We have to stand together across communities to bring down barriers, bring down borders, to say no to Islamophobia, no to anti-Semitism, no to facism and any form of racism. As my Year 8s said, refugees welcome, open the borders."
- Their motion was met with fierce criticism. Chris McGovern of the Campaign for Real Education, said: "Teachers should not be playing the role of fifth columnists in the ideological war currently being fought over our national identity and our national sovereignty.
- 45 "Teaching children that British values are part of "cultural supremacism" will, at best, make them feel guilty about being British and, at worst, radicalise them in order to 'make up' for the sins of their fathers.
- "If one wishes to destroy a nation and build a 'brave new world' you begin by indoctrinating and brainwashing the children. This process of 're-education' has started some years ago in our
- 50 schools and we are, now, seeing its consequences in the suppression of free speech on our university campuses."
- Separately, teachers rejected the Government's anti-radicalisation strategy over concerns it is silencing conversation in the classroom and damaging community cohesion.
- 55 The union called on the Government to withdraw the Prevent strategy regarding schools, which since summer 2015, has obliged teachers to refer to police pupils they suspect of engaging in some sort of terrorist activity or radical behaviour.
- The duty has been largely considered a failure by teaching leaders partly due to the fact that around 90 per cent of referrals end in no action being taken, with a catalogue of high-profile examples. [...]

Is free speech in British universities under threat?

Universities are meant to be guardians of debate and challenging ideas. Yet as campuses become 'safe spaces', the right of students not to be offended is taking priority, and voices are being silenced.

Andrew Anthony, *The Observer*, January 24th, 2016

Until less than a year ago, only pigeons took much notice of the statue that sits in an alcove on the High Street facade two floors above the entrance to the Rhodes building of Oriel College, Oxford. A 4ft-high slab of limestone erected in 1911, it depicts Cecil Rhodes, the arch imperialist, and one-time student of Oriel.

Then a campaign was started called Rhodes Must Fall aimed at removing what the protesters see as an offensive symbol of colonialism. Rhodes, after all, was a white supremacist who was instrumental in the exploitation of southern Africa.

"It is disgusting that I as a person who comes from South Africa, where Rhodes committed all these crimes, have to walk past this," explained co-founder of the campaign Ntokozo Qwabe, himself a former Rhodes scholar at Keble College (he rejects accusations of hypocrisy, arguing that Rhodes's money was stolen from Africa in the first place).

Like all the best debates, the one surrounding the statue has split opinion. Various historians have defended Rhodes as a man of his time, and have pointed out that if he goes, then everyone from Oliver Cromwell to Winston Churchill could be excised from public view as well. Oriel has begun a six-month consultation process to decide whether the statue should be removed. And last week an Oxford Union debate voted narrowly in favour of taking down the statue.

In one sense then, the campaign is an example of healthy argument and free speech in operation. As Youssef Robinson, another member of Rhodes Must Fall, has written: "[W]e want to create the opportunity for voices and histories that are traditionally marginalised to be given a platform. This, to us, is the definition of intellectual curiosity."

But the campaign has also come to symbolise something else, a new intolerance of words and images that is sweeping across British and American university campuses, a zealous form of cultural policing that relies on accusatory rhetoric and a righteous desire to censor history, literature, politics and culture. As such, the protest is the latest of a series of flashpoints and incidents at British universities over the past year that have centred on issues of freedom of expression and protection from offence.

Qwabe, who speaks with passion and gesticulating anger, has said that the statue, the curriculum and the shortage of black students and academics at Oxford forms part of a "racist" outlook that amounts to "structural violence".

To those who have not been following events in universities in America and the UK, Qwabe's language may seem overblown. But according to Joanna Williams, an expert in education at the University of Kent, it's a discourse that Anglo-American academics themselves have advanced. Writing in her new book, *Academic Freedom in an Age of Conformity*, she says: "Instead of an intellectual robustness to challenge and debate views, academics are teaching that words can inflict violence and oppression and should be censored."

In America this perception of latent violence is termed "microaggression". Last November students occupied the president of Princeton's office and demanded that the name of Woodrow Wilson, America's 28th president and one-time head of Princeton, be removed from the university campus. Wilson had reintroduced segregation into the federal workplace and as such all reference to him was an offensive act of microaggression to the protesters. They also called for "cultural competency training" for academics and mandatory courses on marginalised peoples.

Two weeks ago, on the day of her formal installation as the new vice-chancellor of Oxford, the political scientist Louise Richardson spoke about the tensions to be found on university campuses across Britain. "Education is not meant to be comfortable," she said. "Education should be about confronting ideas you find really objectionable, figuring out why it is you find them objectionable, fashioning a reasoned argument against them, confronting the person you disagree with and trying to change their mind, being open to them changing your mind. That isn't a comfortable experience, but it is a very educational one."

Richardson, who is against the removal of the Rhodes statue, speaks at a time when the role of universities is under sustained challenge from a generation of students who have different ideas and expectations of what an education should and should not entail.

One of the unforeseen aspects of the introduction of market principles to British academic life over the past decade is that fee-paying students have come to see themselves as customers, and as a consequence have grown more ready to assert their rights and voice their dissatisfactions. And if they don't like the look or sound of something, then the answer for an increasing number of students is not to confront it but demand its removal.

As Williams writes: "In today's marketed and consumer-driven higher-education sector, many students have come to expect freedom from speech. They argue the university campus should be a 'safe space', free from emotional harm or potential offence." [...]

1 London Versus ISIS

Dominique Moisi, *Project Syndicate*, MAY 30, 2016

20 "I feel so proud of my city," my interlocutor says, referring to the election of the first Muslim, Sadiq Khan, as Mayor of London. She is Catholic, though she identifies first and foremost as British. But, like many
5 other Londoners, she was inspired by Khan's message of hope over fear.

Khan's election contrasts sharply with dynamics that seem to be at work elsewhere in the West. European populations – in Hungary and Poland, and with a close call in Austria – are falling prey to increasingly radical, openly xenophobic populism. In the United States, Donald Trump's bombastic bigotry has won him the Republican nomination for the presidency.

10 Londoners certainly had the option of intolerance. They could have voted for the Conservative candidate, Zac Goldsmith, who persistently accused Khan of having ties with "radical Muslims figures."

The expectation, without reason or evidence, that any Muslim person is linked to extremism is undeniably racist. Leveling such accusations against a Muslim running for public office has nothing to do with protecting the public interest. The purpose of such tactics is to reinforce the notion that no

15 Muslim can be trusted to hold an important leadership position.

Many attempt to justify this view by pointing out that the Koran makes no distinction between "what belongs to God and what belongs to Caesar." But that implies that all Muslims behave exclusively according to the tenets of the Koran, without regard for secular law. That is simply not true.

20 In some cases, there are questions about how Islam's adherents, including some of its most visible representatives, approach the subject of Islam's role in the West. The scholar Tariq Ramadan, for example, has spoken of the rise of a "European Islam," which anchors Islamic principles to the cultural reality of Western Europe. I fully support this notion, as long as this new Islam shares without reservation the values, beliefs, and memories of Europeans (including recognition of Israel's right to exist). Unfortunately, when I expressed this to Ramadan in a debate years ago, he remained silent.

25 The challenges that may arise when incorporating Islam into Europe's already-diverse societies do not, in any sense, mean that Muslims cannot be trusted to lead well. Yet some, particularly in France, are now warning that Khan's election is the first step toward a not-too-distant future in which Muslims impose Islamic law on European countries, a scenario made vivid by Michel Houellebecq's latest novel, *Submission*. (The book, however, can be interpreted less as a prediction of a Muslim takeover
30 than as a criticism of French political correctness, which seems to adhere to the mantra, "Anyone but the National Front.")

The implications of Khan's election are likely to contradict the bigots and fear mongers. Indeed, beyond acting as a slap in the face to Europe's populist forces, Khan's victory will deal a blow to the "Islamic State" (ISIS), which for the purpose of recruitment depends on young European Muslims' feelings of humiliation, marginalization, and failure.

35 With a Muslim as Mayor of London – a great Western city, which has suffered brutal terrorist attacks – it will be that much harder for jihadists to convince potential recruits in the West that their governments and societies are seeking to repress them. If young Muslims can succeed in the West, why would they give up their lives for ISIS, which is already losing ground in Iraq and Syria?

40 Of course, Muslim success stories like Khan's remain too few and far between. But there is much to be gained from recognizing, publicizing, and multiplying them. This would probably be easier to achieve in Britain than in France, which remains fixated on *laïcité* (the absolute separation of church and state that is at the core of French republican identity).

45 In short, by rejecting Islamophobia and reiterating their belief in the values of an open society, Londoners have dealt a blow to Islamists. But it would be dangerous to overestimate the implications of Khan's election.

For one thing, London is hardly representative of the entire United Kingdom, much less the rest of Europe or the West as a whole. The city is more cosmopolitan than New York, as culturally dynamic as Berlin, and much more self-confident than Paris. It is exceptional in its energy and openness. If only
50 Londoners were to vote in the June 23 referendum, they would most likely choose to remain in the EU, despite the Union's flaws.

For another, London's openness and confidence is dependent, at least partly, on economic growth and prosperity. After all, it is far easier to share a large and growing pie. The "Polish plumber" who contributed so clearly to the beautification of London starting in the early 1990s was an economic asset,
55 never a threat, and at least indirectly paved the way for workers from other countries and cultures.

Nonetheless, the openness of Londoners – especially at a moment when so many of their Western counterparts are being tempted by bigotry – is worthy of celebration. Rather than answering fear with more fear, they elected the better candidate, regardless of religion. That is how it should be.

1 A British Test of Reason

Jean PISANI-FERRY, *Project Syndicate*, MAY 31, 2016

5 If voters in the United Kingdom decide in the country's referendum on June 23 to leave the European Union, it will not be for economic reasons. They may choose Brexit because they want full sovereignty, because they hate Brussels, or because they want migrants to return home, but not because they expect great economic benefits.

10 The pro-Brexit camp initially appeared to be holding two strong economic cards. The first was UK citizens' overwhelming rejection of their country's net fiscal transfer to the rest of the EU, which currently amounts to 0.4% of GDP. Since Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher first demanded to have "her money back" in 1979, the budgetary costs of EU membership have completely overshadowed its economic benefits in the public's view.

15 The second card was the sorry state of continental Europe's economy. In terms of GDP growth, employment, or innovation, other EU countries, on average, lag behind the UK (and, to an even greater extent, the United States). Whereas EU membership was once regarded as a gateway to prosperity, it is increasingly viewed as a drag on progress.

20 But lately, as John Van Reenen of the London School of Economics recently put it, the economic case for Brexit has been largely missing in action. Its advocates are at pains to explain what kind of trade and partnership agreements, if any, Britain could enter into with the EU, much less how those agreements would be superior to the current arrangement. As a result, it is tough to argue that the UK would receive a net economic boost – or even that it will not suffer considerably – by leaving the EU.

25 Of the eight economic evaluations recently surveyed by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, a respected independent research institution, only one claims that leaving the EU would lead to significant economic gains. And that study – produced, unsurprisingly, by Economists for Brexit – has been sharply criticized by the rest of the economic profession for lacking an appropriate analytical basis.

30 Most studies find that Britain would suffer significantly from leaving the EU. UK exporters would end up participating less in the large EU market, and they would be shut out of EU-negotiated agreements ensuring access to major international markets. While the UK could negotiate new agreements with these partners, that would take time, and, acting alone, its negotiating power would presumably be weaker.

35 This means that the UK would trade less with EU and non-EU partners alike. It would pay higher prices for inputs and consumer goods, and British firms' reduced integration into global value chains would undermine productivity. The cost in terms of foregone GDP would be 5-20 times higher than the saving implied by not contributing to the EU budget. That is not an appealing deal, to say the least.

40 All modern analysis of economic internationalization shows that foreign trade is a powerful selection mechanism. It provides major growth opportunities for the most productive and innovative firms, while enabling them to learn from their overseas competitors. It is no accident that the world's best firms – which have the highest productivity, profits, and wages, and invest in strengthening human capital – are trade champions. Brexit's adverse impact on UK firms' scope for development would further increase the economic cost.

45 These arguments have been forcefully advanced ahead of the referendum. Yet they have not simplified the debate on the costs and benefits of Brexit. This may be partly because that debate has not played out along party lines. Prime Minister David Cameron's Conservatives are deeply divided on the topic, while Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party is lukewarm about the EU. Because the choice is not between left and right, independent views have gained greater weight.

50 The June 23 referendum is important in its own right, owing to its far-reaching implications for the UK's relationship with Europe. But it will also deliver broader lessons.

55 If British voters decide to leave the EU, it will indicate that rational economic arguments carry less weight than emotional appeals. Such an outcome will bolster populist forces elsewhere – from Italy to France to the US – in their advocacy of isolationist policies that most experts regard as economic nonsense. To oppose such forces and policies, mainstream political parties will have to address their failure, even with the facts on their side, to offer a narrative compelling enough to convince voters to choose economic openness.

60 A vote by a majority of British citizens to remain in the EU would have the opposite impact, highlighting that, whatever negative feelings people may have about a policy or entity, reason and logic cannot be tossed aside. Equally important, such an outcome could encourage greater scrutiny of the economic consequences of populist programs in the US and the rest of Europe.

What is at stake in the June 23 referendum is therefore not only the relationship between Britain and the EU – or even the future of the "European project." How voters decide will be an important test of whether democratic choices in advanced countries are governed by economic rationality or popular passions.

EDITOR'S CHOICE | The Ululations of Radical College Crybabies

By Michelle Malkin. *Human Events*, Nov. 20, 2015.

Deray McKesson, the professional agitator whose racial rabble-rousing began at tax-subsidized Teach for America, proudly unveiled his new enterprise on the Internet Thursday: A website chronicling "THE DEMANDS" of his radical brothers and sisters on college campuses across Northern America. "We recently launched <http://thedemands.org> which compiles the college demands from across the country," he tweeted. "Check it out."

5 I did. Man, oh, man, are the kids "DEMAND"-y these days! Whoops, kids, did I offend you with "Man, oh, man?" I plead guilty to "cisheteropatriarchy." Also: ageism! Prosecute me for serial microaggressions and throw me in the safe-space violators' slammer. But I micro-aggress-digress.

10 The current list of campuses represented on TheDemands.Org includes 37 institutions of higher learning. Or rather, higher moaning. I'm calling the website the Social Justice Warrior Entitlement Mob Tracker. It's a useful database of progressive brats who are part of a clearly coordinated "Black Lives Matter" hijacking of American colleges and universities (with a few Canadian groupies tagging along). Whatever legitimate complaints these privileged — yes, you are privileged to be attending college in America in the 21st century — students may have had, they've utterly beclowned themselves with their over-the-top hysterics.

15 Leading the list is the University of Missouri, which claimed the scalps of the school's president and chancellor last week for insufficient attention to alleged bias incidents and drunken catcalls. It wasn't enough. Never enough.

The Mizzou mob is also demanding a new race-based hiring quota increase for "black faculty and staff members campus-wide by 10 percent" and an increase in "funding and resources for the University of Missouri Counseling Center for the purpose of hiring additional mental health professionals, particularly those of color."

Shakedown godfathers Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson have taught their protesting progeny well.

20 At Amherst College, the "uprisers" are pressuring the president to make — take a deep breath — a "statement of apology to students, alumni and former students, faculty, administration and staff who have been victims of several injustices including but not limited to our institutional legacy of white supremacy, colonialism, anti-black racism, anti-Latino racism, anti-Native American racism, anti-Native/ indigenous racism, anti-Asian racism, anti-Middle Eastern racism, heterosexism, cis-sexism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, ableism, mental health stigma, and classism." Alas, there's no safe space from coddled, overly verbose narcissists.

25 Wait, they're not done. The "Amherst Uprising" tolerance mob also initially demanded that "student(s) who posted the 'All Lives Matter' posters, and the 'Free Speech' posters" that mourned "the true victim of the Missouri Protests: Free Speech," be subject to the school's "Disciplinary Process if a formal complaint is filed, and that they will be required to attend extensive training for racial and cultural competency."

30 That punitive demand was quietly scrubbed from the site, but the free speech-squelching mission of all of these bubble-wrapped crybabies who can't handle dissent of any kind is unmistakable. So is their brazen grab for power and money. They're not interested in gaining an education. They want political control.

As the protest leaders of the Atlanta University Center Consortium for black colleges made clear, their goal is complete transformation of their campuses to fulfill their "civic duty through direct action and grassroots organization."

35 Oh, and they "DEMAND" to get paid. ASAP! Boston College's demand-y demanders "demand the introduction of compulsory, in-person, and regular anti-oppression training" to be "led and organized by people of color with significant experience in anti-oppression activism or scholarship" who "should be compensated and acknowledged for their labor" beginning in "spring 2016." Not to be overlooked, social justice painters and papier mache protesters made sure to include Demand No. 7 from St. Louis University: "Mutually agreed upon commissioned artwork."

40 Unlike revolutionaries of past eras who cast off their shackles and demanded that their oppressors leave them alone, the 21st century insurgents demand that their indulgent overseers wipe their tears, hold their hands, and provide them round-the-clock therapy.

45 At Princeton, liberal professors and administrators patted themselves on the back for assuaging hurt feelings and eliminating the age-old tradition of calling college heads "masters." (Apparently, "master's degrees" are safe. For now.) But it wasn't enough. Never enough.

50 The "Black Justice League" barged into the Ivy League school's president's office this week demanding full eradication of every reference to progressive racial segregationist Woodrow Wilson at Princeton; "cultural competency training for all staff and faculty"; a racially segregated safe space "dedicated specifically to Black students" who oppose racial segregation (except for themselves); and "classes on the history of marginalized peoples" because "[l]earning about marginalized groups, their cultures, and structures of privilege is just as important as any science or quantitative reasoning course."

Uh-huh. When academic courses get demanding, the weak-minded get demand-y. Listening to the ululations of their own entitled, endless bleating is much more appealing and healing, after all, than multivariate analysis, synthetic organic chemistry or mechanical engineering.

EDITOR'S CHOICE | Seeing Bigots Under Every Rock

By David Limbaugh | *Human Events*, January 19, 2016.

Remember when universities used to encourage freedom of academic inquiry and were seen as intellectual and social preparation for the transition into adulthood? I know; that was a long time ago — before the left infected these institutions.

Everyone knows about the leftward slant of most American universities: their monolithic biases; their bent toward politicizing their curricula; and their practice of indoctrinating students. But increasingly the results of leftist community organizing — the toxins of political correctness — are seeping into university disciplinary rules.

This deplorable trend has concerned me for years, but it is particularly disturbing when it is occurring at my alma mater, the University of Missouri.

I'm not talking about Mizzou's recent racial controversy but reports that the university is now encouraging its students to file a report any time they witness or experience a "bias incident." It would be one thing if they were talking about true incidents of racial or some other form of discrimination, but it appears it's much more expansive than that.

According to the university's online statement, a "bias incident is an act of intolerance which is committed against any person, group or property and which discriminates, stereotypes, harasses or excludes anyone based on" any of some 20 different categories, from race to religion to gender expression, and yes, even physical appearance.

Look out, social fraternities. You better make sure no one overhears your actives talking to pledges.

Does it ever bother you that liberals seem to be preoccupied with these kinds of things — as if they just sit around stewing about how they might be offended?

Do you think it helps society for academic institutions and government to shove these things in our faces all the time and invite us to feel offended at the drop of a hat? Shouldn't we aspire to colorblindness, not look for slurs at every opportunity?

Is it good for students that institutions of higher learning proactively try to turn them into thin-skinned, paranoid wimps? Isn't it bad enough that they offer classes largely devoted to convincing students that men hate and exploit women, whites routinely abuse blacks, the rich are evil and exploit the poor, cops are the enemy and Christians are science-averse Neanderthals — as well as other types of poisonous bilge?

I am not discounting actual incidents of racial bias where people are harmed. But I don't think it's healthy for our institutions to pressure students to see racial or other types of prejudice at every turn. Why pit people against each other? Why stoke people's suspicions of each other? Won't that lead to distrust instead of reduce it?

College students are being groomed for the workforce where they will encounter all kinds of challenges. Should our schools train them not to handle even minor perceived slights on their own but instead hone their skills as tattletales? I suppose it's not that surprising, considering that progressives advocate cradle-to-grave dependency in other respects.

The progressive mindset thrives on generating angst between different groups. Along those lines, Katherine Timpf has observed in National Review Online that the university is encouraging not just alleged victims of "bias" to report these incidents but also others who witness them, even if the alleged victim doesn't feel victimized. The school might as well supply volunteer student thought policemen with uniforms to troll around campus to chill speech.

It appears that this nanny-state administration wants students to report, for example, teasing based on physical appearance. It may not be nice, but does this rise to the level of a disciplinary matter?

Indeed, "name-calling" is listed on the form as an "act of intolerance." The instructions go so far as to say that "extreme examples of bias incidents — regardless of severity — can be reported using this form." Regardless of severity? Wow.

There's another problem with these speech and conduct codes. Those who promulgate and enforce them often have their own biases and generally don't recognize certain groups as worthy of protection. Do you think, for instance, your typical university administration would consider the dissing of Christianity or conservatism actionable violations of the code?

These types of overzealous regulations trivialize actual incidents of discrimination and harm the very groups they purport to help as well as society as a whole.

Maybe the people obsessing over "intolerance" are projecting their own malcontented worldview and would be better served, and would serve others better, if they would just chill out and back off a little bit. Students aren't as helpless or as prejudiced as progressives enjoy depicting them.

The New York Times, June 6, 2016 | The Opinion Pages | OP-ED COLUMNIST

The Madness of America, by Charles M. Blow

The candidacy of Donald Trump, the fervor of those who support it, and the fierce opposition of those who don't is making America mad — both angry and insane, as the dual definitions of the word implies.

One of the most disturbing displays of this madness is the violence that Trump has incited in his supporters, and the violent ways in which opposition forces have responded, like the exchange we saw last week in San Jose.

Both forms of violence are unequivocally wrong, but speak to a base level of hostility that hovers around the man like the stench from rotting flesh.

What is particularly disturbing is to see anti-Trump forces lashing out at Trump's supporters, seemingly provoked simply by a difference in political position. This cannot be. It's self-defeating and narrows the space between the thing you despise and the thing you become.

Listen, I understand how unsettling this man is for many. I understand that he is elevating and normalizing a particular stance of racism and sexism that many view as a spiritual attack, a kind of psychic violence from which they cannot escape.

Furthermore, the election cycle promises at least five more months of this, until Election Day, and even more if by some tragic twist of fate Trump is actually elected.

And, if elected, the threat could move from the rhetoric to the real, wreaking havoc on millions of lives.

I understand the frightful, mind-numbing, hair-raising disbelief that can descend when one realizes that this is indeed plausible.

Recent polls have only added to this anxiety as some have shown an increasingly tight race between him and Hillary Clinton, the likely Democratic nominee; some even have him beating her.

(Now of course, these polls must be taken with a grain of salt. Trump and Clinton are in different phases of the fight: Trump is the presumptive Republican nominee with no remaining opponents and with Republicans coalescing around his candidacy; Clinton is still in a heated contest with Bernie Sanders, who has given no indication of giving up.) I understand that Trump represents a clear and present danger, and having a passionate response that encompasses rage and fear is reasonable. It is understandable to want to make one's displeasure known.

But there is a line one dares not cross, and that is the one of responding to violent rhetoric with violent actions. As I have said before, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said it best in his 1967 book "Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?," and he is worthy of quoting here at length:

"The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence you may murder the liar, but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth. Through violence you may murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate. So it goes. Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that."

You may feel activated by the cause of righteousness, but violence is most often a poor instrument for its implementation. Indeed, violence corrodes righteousness. It robs it of its essence.

The best way to direct passions is not only with the bullhorn, but also at the ballot box.

In a democracy, the vote is the voice. The best way to reduce the threat Trump poses is to register and motivate people who share your view of the threat.

It is easy to look at the throngs who support and exalt this man and be discouraged, but don't be. It is easy to look at Republicans like Paul Ryan abandoning their principles and selling their souls to fall in line behind this man and be discouraged, but don't be. It is easy to see the media fail miserably to counter Trump and his surrogates' Gish-gallop and be discouraged, but don't be.

These are the moments in which the nation's mettle — and ideals — are tested. I have a fundamental belief that although America was born and grew by violence and racial subjugation, that although it has often stumbled and even regressed, that its ultimate bearing is toward the better.

Folks must be reminded that one demagogue cannot lead to a detour or a dismantling. There is an elevated plane of truth that floats a mile above Trump's trough of putrescence.

Trump and his millions of minions have replaced what they call "political correctness" with "ambient viciousness." This won't "make America great again," because the "again" they imagine harkens back to America's darkness. We are the new America — more diverse, more inclusive, more than our ancestors could ever have imagined.

Don't invalidate that by allowing yourselves to be baited into brutishness.

The Nation, June 3, 2016

Trump's Racist Judicial Attack Deliberately Obscures the Larger Story: For-Profit Schools, *by Julianne Hing*

This is where we are at this point of the collective national nightmare of the Republican Party's 2016 campaign: On Thursday, Donald Trump told *The Wall Street Journal* that because of US District Judge Gonzalo Curiel's "Mexican heritage," the federal judge has an "absolute conflict" in presiding over a lawsuit brought by former students of Trump's self-named real-estate courses. Curiel's ethnic background is of importance because, Trump said, "I'm building a wall. It's an inherent conflict of interest." Trump clearly misunderstands the concept; a defendant's own prejudices have no bearing on whether a judge is unfit for the job.

When Trump first mentioned the Indiana-born judge's ethnicity at a San Diego rally last Friday, it was to do his usual jabbing and dancing to avoid ethical punches. At that event, Trump raised Curiel and mentioned his ethnic background in the same breath: "The judge, who happens to be, we believe, Mexican, which is great, I think that's fine," adding that he was sure that Mexican Americans would come around to support him "when I give all these jobs, OK?" Then he circled back around. "I'm getting railroaded by the legal system," he said, "Frankly, they should be ashamed." Trump labeled Curiel "a hater of Donald Trump," and also called him "a total disgrace."

It was a classic Trump move: create bogeymen out of thin air in order to prop up his self-imagined victimhood; home in on a person's race or sex as the basis for his attacks; and then antagonize as a form of diversion from the matter at hand. That matter would be Trump University, the mogul's real-estate courses that purportedly taught customers how to become like Trump, for as much as \$35,000, or starting at the low, low price of \$1,495. The lawsuit alleges that far from teaching students actual real-estate expertise, Trump ran a fraudulent business scheme.

The marketing schemes for Trump's real-estate seminars at times sound ripped straight from the recruitment playbooks of the scandal-plagued for-profit school industry, which has preyed on single moms, people of color, veterans, and those who've been locked out of more prestigious avenues for higher education.

Take, for instance, the 2010 Senate testimony of Joshua Pruyn, a former admissions representative for Westwood College, a for-profit chain of, at the time, 17 campuses. Pruyn was technically an admissions advisor, but in reality his position was that of a glorified sales rep. "During the interview, we were taught to portray ourselves as advisors looking out for the students' best interests and ensuring they were a good fit for the school. This fake interview would allow the representative to ask students questions to uncover a student's motivators and pain points—their hopes, fears, and insecurities—all of which would later be used to pressure a student to enroll," Pruyn testified.

The for-profit schools industry targeted people of color, poor people, and veterans because they were more likely to be eligible for public financial aid like Pell Grants. This much-parodied Everest College commercial should be very familiar with anyone who watches daytime television.

Students of color ended up forming the backbone of the industry's explosive growth in the early and mid-2000s. In the 2010–11 school year, just as the Obama administration's regulatory hammer started to fall on the industry, the for-profit system University of Phoenix was the nation's top producer of new black undergrad graduates. The nation's second-highest producer of new black baccalaureates that year was Ashford University, also a for-profit college.

When the industry's comeuppance came, it was devastating. In lawsuit after lawsuit, universities were accused of fleecing students of their federal student-aid money and saddling them with debt they couldn't repay, and leaving students with an education and credits that weren't transferrable or recognized as valid by other educational institutions. In December 2015, after multiple settlements in various lawsuits, Westwood College—where former admissions recruiter Pruyn worked—agreed not to enroll any more students.

After suffering a barrage of these kinds of lawsuits and increased regulation from the Obama administration, the for-profit schools industry is now in the tank these days. Enrollment is down; many have been maligned for the shady businesses that they were, including Trump University.

Hours after Trump brought Judge Curiel into his campaign theater last week, Curiel unsealed documents related to his case, at the request of *The Washington Post*. Those documents detail the aggressive marketing and recruitment playbook that Trump University sales staffers worked from. The playbook urged sales members to not let prospective customers be deterred by their own lack of money ("If they believe in you and your product, they will find the money"), and to guide consumers through "the roller coaster of emotions," so as to encourage students to cough up cash. The guides urged sales members to home in on people's vulnerabilities for maximum effect "during closing time." ("For example: are they a single parent of three children that may need money for food?")

These tactics, Trump would rather not discuss. Always easier, after all, to pivot to the most base of appeals—racial and ethnic antagonism—and the cheapest of tactics—bullying others and calling it self-defense.

JULIANNE HING is covering the 2016 elections from the perspective of immigrant communities for The Nation. She previously covered immigration, education and police accountability for Colorlines.

The Boston Globe, Jan. 20, 2016

OPINION | America as bystander to the refugee crisis

By Michael Ignatieff

The Aegean Sea is cold and dark at this time of year but the refugees keep coming. Every week, somebody drowns, often a child, but the refugees risk the journey so they can reach safety in Germany. Still other desperate people, fleeing chaos in Africa, risk everything to cross from Libya to Italy. This human tide of Syrians, Afghans, Iraqis, Eritreans, and dozens of other nations represents the largest movement of people since World War II.

- 5 The European Union is coming apart under the strain. Efforts to share the burden and preserve border-free travel are failing. Razor wire is going up across the continent. Sweden says it won't take any more people, Austria says the same, and everyone is waiting for Angela Merkel to shut Germany's borders for good.

So what is America doing?

- 10 Let's be charitable. The United States is the largest donor to the relief agencies trying to cope with the more than four million refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. Secretary of State John Kerry is trying to get peace talks started in Vienna so the war can end and refugees can go home. Nobody believes this will happen anytime soon.

- 15 What America is not doing is taking its fair share of refugees. In four years of bloody conflict, America has given refuge to scarcely 2,000 Syrians. That's less than the number who arrive in Germany every day. President Obama announced an increase in the Syrian refugee quota to 10,000 a year, but Republicans in Congress, joined by some Democrats, are trying to make it impossible to take them in, and some governors want to bar the door of their states.

In the wake of the shootings in San Bernardino, Donald Trump said he wouldn't just bar refugees, he'd bar Muslims altogether. If he has his way with public opinion, the mightiest country on earth, the one with the best record for welcoming refugees, will be saying to the world that it is too frightened to live by its own best traditions.

- 20 What a small country America has become.

A big country would take in Muslim refugees and say to the terrorists in Islamic State: You won't scare us into not doing what's right. A big country would stand by Europe and its Middle Eastern allies and help them to cope. The country we've got is a bystander.

- 25 This is a famously big-hearted country, but after San Bernardino, it wants to be sure that generosity toward refugees won't put itself at risk. In a study for the Shorenstein Center at the Kennedy School, a faculty-student research group under my guidance has developed a detailed proposal to vet refugees in the camps in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, airlift them to secure military installations in the United States, and complete their vetting before releasing them to the community groups who've proved they can integrate refugees successfully. This is the model the United States adopted in 1999, when it flew 4,000 refugees from Kosovo to Fort Dix, N.J., and
30 processed them there, before releasing them to their new homes across the United States. What a big country did then, it could still do now.

Settling refugees successfully in the United States counters Islamic State messages of hate with a message of hope. It will help to reduce radicalization in the refugee camps and, when the war is over, and many of these refugees return to their country, they'll remember that America stood by them in their time of need.

- 35 Accelerating the flow of refugees to safety in the United States also sends a key message of support to European allies like Angela Merkel of Germany and Francois Hollande of France, who risk going under to a rising right-wing tide that is not just antirefugee but also anti-American.

- 40 American detachment from the European crisis is a stunning disappointment to Europeans who can remember a time, as recent as 1995, when American leadership put a stop to the Bosnian war. Europeans watch an administration pivoting to Asia and can't understand how it has forgotten that Europe remains a vital trading partner and its most important strategic ally.

- 45 By taking in more refugees, fully funding the camps in Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon, and going all out to get a cease-fire in Syria, the United States will revive the US-European alliance, stabilize friends like Angela Merkel who may lose power, and send a message that America is still prepared to defend Europe. Imagine how the refugee crisis looks to Vladimir Putin. The worse it gets in Western Europe, the easier it becomes for him to divide Ukraine in two, intimidate the Baltic states, and eat away at the order of free peoples that America built up on the ruins of the Soviet empire. Generous refugee policy, it turns out, isn't just a way to feel better. It's a way for America to maintain its leadership in a dangerous world.

Michael Ignatieff teaches at Harvard's Kennedy School

The Baltimore Sun, June 9, 2016

A battle for America's racial soul

By Michael Higginbotham

With the requisite number of delegates needed for victory secured, Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton appear ready to receive their respective party nominations. Make no mistake: When they face each other in the fall, it will be nothing less than a battle for America's racial soul.

During the primary campaign, Trump was asked by a reporter whether he would disavow the support of former KKK leader David Duke and white supremacist groups in general. Trump sidestepped the question, saying "I know nothing about David Duke; I know nothing about white supremacists." As criticism to his response mounted, Trump said he did actually disavow Duke and blamed his earlier non-committal statement on a "bad earpiece." Because of the equipment malfunction, Trump said, "I could hardly hear what he's saying."

For American voters, what really matters is not what Trump could or could not hear during a television interview, but what Duke heard by listening to Trump. Duke explained that he supported Trump for president because he believes that Trump is a leader who will "break-up Jewish dominated lobbies" and "ensure that white Americans are allowed to preserve and promote their heritage and interests."

Why does Duke feel so certain that Trump shares his hate-filled vision of America? Because so much of Trump's appeal is based on racial code words and turning back the clock on civil rights progress since World War II.

When Trump entered the presidential race, he launched his campaign by impugning an entire population. Mexicans coming into the United States, according to Trump, might include a few good people, but far too many were "rapists" and "criminals." He proposed keeping Muslims from coming to America, at least on a temporary basis. Of course this is unworkable; how would he possibly identify the religious faith of everyone coming into this country? The significance of the proposal is that it deliberately insults a religion of over 1.5 billion people, much to the delight of the religiously intolerant.

When asked about the problem of the use of excessive force by police against minorities, Trump responded that "police are absolutely mistreated and misunderstood." Trump shows frighteningly little concern for minority victims of police brutality. To Trump, the primary solution is giving "power back to the police, because crime is rampant."

Modern day candidates like Trump always deny using racial code words. Trump confidently declares "I have a great relationship with the blacks" and "the Hispanics love me." The best way to tell, however, that a racial dog whistle is being used, is when racists like Duke come racing over in support.

The Republicans have not addressed this problem with any adequate response. Clinton, though, will be both willing and able to confront Trump's race-baiting directly. Her campaign has embraced the slogan "break down the barriers" championing opportunities for poor and excluded communities and vowing to destroy obstacles of equality in the economic, education, racial, gender and LGBT arenas. In speeches, debates and policy papers, Clinton made clear that racial inequality throughout American society must be addressed and that "America must be made whole" to include all of its citizens.

Clinton observed that the issues raised by the recent deaths of so many black victims as a result of actions by law enforcement personnel highlight the need for reformed police practices. While Clinton recognizes that body cameras on every police officer will help, she emphasizes economic solutions as well. As Clinton explained to a civil rights group in February, "what's needed to provide economic opportunity is, better educational chances for young people, and more support for families so they can do the best jobs they are capable of doing to help support their own children."

Most recently, disputes between the candidates over issues of race have spilled over to their supporters. At a Trump event in Cleveland in mid-March, a Black Lives Matter supporter was told to "go back to Africa," and at a canceled Trump rally in Chicago later that same week, an African-American protestor was punched by a white Trump supporter who later suggested if the protestor returned, "we might have to kill him." When asked about the incident, Trump responded that "he was looking into paying the supporter's legal fees." In contrast, Clinton accused Trump of "pitting Americans against each other" and later vowed to "work against Trump's hateful rhetoric."

Clinton's articulation of the problems and commitment to implementing solutions that could unify Americans will create a sharp contrast with Trump's racial innuendoes and divisive language. The stakes of this election are indeed high, with America's racial soul up for grabs.

ABOUT THE WRITER: Michael Higginbotham is the author of *Ghosts of Jim Crow: Ending Racism in Post-Racial America* and is the Joseph Curtis Professor of Law at the University of Baltimore School of Law.

The Race-Obsessed Left Has Released a Monster It Can't Control

by David French | *The National Review*, January 26, 2016

Among the more amusing responses to *National Review*'s "Against Trump" editorial effort was the claim that Dr. Frankenstein was turning on its monster. In other words, we at *National Review* created the allegedly racist, xenophobic conditions necessary for Donald Trump's rise. Here's the *New Republic*'s Jeet Heer articulating the conventional wisdom:

5 *There is very little that Trump has said or done that can't find prior sanction in*
National Review, be it racism, anti-immigrant nativism, or sexism. In the last
debate, in response to an attack on his "New York values," Trump noted that
10 *conservatives do come from New York and cited William F. Buckley. It is fair to*
see Trump's version of white identity politics as firmly in the tradition of Buckley
and his magazine.

And Heer's not alone. *Media Matters* helpfully compiled multiple additional examples under the headline "They Built This." I have two responses. First — and most obvious — it's simply false to ascribe widespread conservative concern over immigration to "white identity politics." Does the Left really believe that *National Review* or its readers would be indifferent to the national-security concerns
15 of anti-American terrorists attempting to infiltrate the ranks of, say, Latvian or Norwegian immigrants? Would our economic concerns be any less valid if large numbers of low-skilled Greek immigrants were depressing blue-collar wages and straining social services? Calling out alleged "white identity politics" is an excellent way to avoid having to debate conservatives. After all, who needs to debate racists? As my friend Ravi Zacharias frequently observes — in the battle of ideas,
20 stigma tends to defeat dogma. In other words, if you can shame and insult your opposition, then you never have to engage their ideas. At the same time, however, a small group of online trolls have indeed gathered under Trump's banner. Calling themselves the "alt-right," they're a motley group of white nationalists and wanna-be fascists. They've become adept at flooding Twitter feeds and comments boards, giving the illusion of large-scale online strength. While it's difficult to determine how many
25 actual American voters belong to the alt-right (versus the number who are busy tweeting from their mom's basement in Austria), they do exist, and they've succeeded in elbowing their way into the national conversation.

But who's to blame? First and foremost: They are. Individuals are responsible for their own ideology and actions. At the same time, however, people respond to their environment, and it is entirely
30 predictable that race obsession will yield more race obsession, and the consequences are rarely desirable or controllable. If anyone besides the members of the alt-right is responsible for the latest iteration of whiteness-obsessed fanaticism, is it the conservative movement that is consistently calling for a colorblind politics and culture — echoing Martin Luther King's call to look to the content of one's character over the color of one's skin? Or is it the progressive movement that pushes explicitly
35 race-based organizations such as La Raza or Black Lives Matter while specifically scorning whites, Western civilization, and so-called white privilege? The Left has elevated a man — Ta-Nehisi Coates — to the pantheon of public intellectuals whose expressions of contempt for his white fellow citizens are so pervasive that, if the roles were reversed, he'd be relegated to the darkest corners of the hateweb. The Left is imposing race obsession on its presidential candidates to the extent that they're
40 now afraid even to declare that "all lives matter." Does the Left really believe that such nonsense will spawn only productive and thoughtful critiques?

The Left is fond of saying that "violence begets violence." It's a tired trope, but it contains a kernel of truth — people do tend to respond to violence with more violence. But doesn't racial obsession beget racial obsession? All my life I've been part of a conservative movement that has been struggling
45 mightily to move the culture past the politics of race and into a politics of universal human dignity, with each of us created in the image of God. It's a tall order, made more challenging by the complex interplay of history, culture, and man's fallen nature, but our task has been made even more difficult by leftist political warfare that empowers and enriches itself by exploiting and perpetuating the historical, cultural, and racial grievances that have plagued our culture (and virtually every culture on the face of the Earth). Who "built" modern white identity politics? White supremacists did, but along
50 the way the Left has handed them the bricks and mortar to construct their edifice of hate. The blame for race obsession belongs to the race obsessives — of all ideological stripes.

The National Review | October 6, 2015

Differences between the Right and the Left on Gun Control

by Dennis Prager

Assuming that there are good and bad people on both the right and the left and that everyone is horrified by mass shootings, how is one to explain the great divide between the Right and the Left on the gun issue as it relates to mass murders, such as the one recently committed at Umpqua Community College? Why does the Left focus on more gun-control laws, and why doesn't the Right? One reason the Right doesn't focus on gun-control laws is quintessentially American. Many Americans believe that it is their right — and even their duty — to own guns for self-protection. Unique among major democratic and industrialized nations, Americans have traditionally believed in relying on the state as little as possible. The Right carries on this tradition, while the Left believes in relying on the state as much as possible — including, just to name a few areas, in education, health care, and personal protection. A second reason for the Left-Right divide is that the Left is uncomfortable with blaming people for bad actions. The Right, on the other hand, is far more inclined to blame people for their bad actions.

The Right tends to ask, "Does it do good?" The Left is more likely to ask, "Does it feel good?" Thus, liberals generally blame racism and poverty for violent crimes committed by poor blacks and Hispanics, while conservatives blame the criminals. Likewise, during the Cold War, the Left regarded nuclear weapons as the enemy, while conservatives saw Communist regimes that possessed nuclear weapons as the enemy. It was the arms, not the values of those in possession of the arms, that troubled the Left. Attitudes toward the minimum wage provide an excellent example. As I noted in a recent column, in 1987, the *New York Times* editorialized against any minimum wage. The title of the editorial said it all: "The Right Minimum Wage: \$0.00

"There's a virtual consensus among economists," the *Times* editorial stated, "that the minimum wage is an idea whose time has passed. Raising the minimum wage by a substantial amount would price working poor people out of the job market. . . ." In 1987 the *Times* editorialized against having any minimum wage because it asked the question: "Does it do good?" Twenty-seven years later, the same editorial page wrote the opposite of what it had written in 1987, and called for a major increase in the minimum wage. Why? Did the laws of economics change? Of course not. What changed was the question the *Times* asked. Having moved further and further left, the *Times* editorial page was now preoccupied not with what does good, but with what feels good. And it feels good to raise the minimum wage for poor people.

So, too, on gun control. Immediately after the killings in Oregon, President Obama expressed great anger over Congress's unwillingness to pass more gun laws. But neither he nor other left-wing gun-control advocates tell us what law or laws — short of universal confiscation of guns (which is as possible as universal deportation of illegal immigrants) — would have stopped any of the mass shootings that recently occurred. To liberals it feels good to declare a college a "gun-free zone." Does it do good? Of course not. It does the opposite. It informs would-be murderers that no one will shoot them. Calling for more gun laws enables liberals to feel good about themselves; it makes the Right look bad; and it increases government control over the citizenry. Calling for more gun laws enables liberals to feel good about themselves; it makes the Right look bad; and it increases government control over the citizenry. A liberal trifecta. Are federal background checks a good idea? The idea sounds perfectly reasonable. But unless they would have prevented any of the recent mass shootings, they are of no help. So, then, short of universal confiscation, which is both practically and constitutionally impossible, what will do good? What will reduce gun violence? One thing that would make incomparably more difference than gun laws in reducing gun violence is more fathers. Why aren't liberals as passionate about policies that ensure that millions more men father their children as they are about gun laws? Because such thinking is anathema to the Left. The Left works diligently to keep single mothers dependent on the state (and therefore on the Democratic party). And emphasizing a lack of fathers means human behavior is more to blame than guns.

Another is to cultivate participation in organized religion. Young men who attend church weekly commit far fewer murders than those who do not. But this too is anathema to the Left. The secular Left never offers mainstream American religions as a solution to social problems. To do so, like emphasizing fathers, would shift the blame from guns to the criminal users of guns.

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Los Angeles Times, February 11, 2016

Blocking the ballot box, by Ari Berman

As Iowa voters headed to their caucus sites, 94-year-old Rosanell Eaton sat in the first row of a federal courtroom in Winston-Salem, N.C., to witness the closing arguments of a trial challenging North Carolina's new voter identification law.

Eaton, who is African-American and grew up in the Jim Crow South, had to recite the preamble to the Constitution from memory to register to vote. She had been participating in elections for 70 years when North Carolina passed its strict voter ID law in 2013. Lawyers for the North Carolina NAACP played a videotaped deposition during the trial of Eaton recounting how the names on her driver's license and voter registration card did not match. To get her paperwork in order, Eaton had to make 11 trips to different state agencies in 2015, totaling more than 200 miles and 20 hours.

"I'm disgusted," Eaton told the News Observer, Raleigh's daily paper, as she left the courtroom.

North Carolina is one of 16 states that have new voting restrictions in place since the last presidential contest, according to the Brennan Center for Justice, accounting for 178 electoral votes, including in crucial swing states such as Ohio, Wisconsin and Virginia.

The voting changes include requiring government-issued photo ID to cast a ballot, cutting early voting, eliminating election-day voter registration and demanding proof of citizenship to register. For voters like Eaton, how and if they'll be able to cast a ballot will be as big of a question as who they'll vote for this year.

The nationwide push to make it harder to vote began in earnest after the 2010 election, when Republicans gained control of an unprecedented number of states. Their goal was to make the electorate older, whiter and more conservative compared with the younger and more diverse electorate that turned out in record numbers for Barack Obama in 2008.

Although the connection isn't obvious to everyone, these voting restrictions disproportionately affect the core of Obama's political coalition, including young people (some states exclude student IDs from the list of acceptable documents) and minority voters (who are more likely to vote early and less likely than whites to have state-issued IDs). A new study by political scientists at the University of California at San Diego found that "a strict ID law could be expected to depress Latino turnout by 9.3 points, Black turnout by 8.6 points, and Asian American turnout by 12.5 points."

Many new voting laws were blocked by the Justice Department and federal courts during the 2012 election; and Republican attempts to restrict the franchise may have led to a backlash among minority voters. In 2012, for the first time in U.S. history, black turnout rates exceeded white turnout rates.

But in 2013, voter suppression efforts got a powerful shot in the arm when the Supreme Court invalidated the centerpiece of the Voting Rights Act, ruling that states with the longest histories of voting discrimination no longer had to approve their election changes with the federal government. As a result of the decision, new restrictions were allowed to take effect in states such as Alabama, North Carolina and Mississippi. The 2016 election will be the first presidential contest in 50 years where voters cannot rely on the full protections of the Voting Rights Act.

Of course it's not just former Confederate states that have moved to gum up the democratic process. New Hampshire has a new voter ID law on the books. Those without the required ID can still cast a regular ballot by signing an affidavit, but they will have to let poll workers take their pictures, which could lead to voter intimidation and longer lines at the polls. Wait times increased by 50 percent when the voter ID law was partially implemented, without the camera requirement, during the 2012 election.

The latest struggle over voting rights is at root a battle over the country's changing demographics and how much political power minority populations can exercise. The 2016 electorate will be the most diverse in American history, with voters of color making up 31 percent of eligible voters, up from 29 percent in 2012, according to the Pew Research Center.

Given the Republican Party's reliance on white voters and unpopularity among minority voters, it should come as no surprise that the leading GOP presidential contenders have all supported tough voting restrictions. Ted Cruz was an early proponent of voter ID laws; Marco Rubio defended the cutbacks to early voting in Florida that led to six-hour lines in 2012; Jeb Bush presided over a disastrous voter purge during the 2000 election in Florida that kept thousands from voting; John Kasich signed legislation in Ohio cutting early voting and eliminating same-day voter registration.

The differences between the parties on voting rights have never been starker. Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders have called for restoring the Voting Rights Act and expanding reforms such as early voting and automatic voter registration. These are positive developments, but it's ultimately bad for democracy when access to the ballot becomes a bitterly partisan issue.

ABOUT THE WRITER: Ari Berman is a senior contributing writer for the Nation and the author of *Give Us the Ballot: The Modern Struggle for Voting Rights in America*. He wrote this for the *Los Angeles Times*.

American Thinker, October 18, 2015

Climate Change and Leftist Hypocrisy

By Bruce Walker

Nothing exposes the cynical hypocrisy of the left more than its jihadist attitude toward the dubious theory of man-made global warming. The phoniness and selfishness of the left show up in several different ways.

5 The left pronounces manmade global warming "settled science" but then insists that we continue to spend billions of dollars in climate change research. If it is truly settled science, then we need to spend no more money at all on research, and if this supposed dire threat requires immediate action by governments, then even research on the best way to contain climate change is unnecessary.

10 Scientific research has value when there are "schools of thought" in science. If some scientists doubt climate change and others believe that climate change is global cooling and others think that any climate change is natural and not man-made – and if there are others who believe in man-made global warming – then there is a purpose and a value to research.

What climate change research really means is the heavy-handed use of taxpayer-funded leftist totalitarianism in the institutional bureaucracies of academia, whose sole purpose is to propagandize the gullible with specious reasoning, with the heavy stamp of "Official Science."

15 The left professes to love progress, *but climate change itself is progress*. Changing climate throughout history gradually reduces the value of land owned by those who live in the most desirable areas and gradually increases the value of land owned by those who live in less desirable areas. Regardless of whether the world is getting warmer or getting colder, climate change redistributes wealth.

20 Keeping nature exactly as it is reflects the hidebound mindset of an ultra-reactionary, which is to say of a modern leftist. These are the same dull, plump nabobs who despise free enterprise precisely because that process is constant and unmanaged revolution when the left wants nothing really ever to change at all.

That means, of course, that these privileged clerics of leftists never see smaller government or more freedom as the solution to environmental problems, and so even if next year new scientific evidence suggested that the planet is cooling, not warming, the same leftists who today lecture that free enterprise is heating the planet would then, undoubtedly, find that free enterprise was cooling the planet.

25 Leftist hypocrisy regarding climate change can also be seen in its attitude toward actual environmental changes. Venice is sinking into the Adriatic, but no leftist is calling for lowering the Adriatic or raising Venice. This is too real a crisis for the unserious left.

30 If the sinking of Venice seems too "trivial," then consider a dramatic and pending ecological apocalypse. The West Coast of America will collapse into the Pacific Ocean, and the earthquakes that plague it today are a very real symptom of the grinding plate tectonics that will someday produce huge tsunamis and drastic climatic changes.

35 Shouldn't we be evacuating the West Coast and sending Californians to Quonset huts in Kansas and Arkansas until further resettlement can be done? Shouldn't we stop all construction along the West Coast and begin, instead, the deconstruction of those cities with all their steel and concrete and people? Sure, if the left actually cared about pending ecological catastrophes.

40 (As far as that goes, if leftists really believed that global warming is real and the low-level areas like Rhode Island and Delaware will be under water in a few decades, shouldn't the left be shipping those in the densely populated Northeast to parts of Flyover Country that face population losses as perfectly good homes in rural Oklahoma or Nebraska are left to decay? If the Potomac River is going to rise, and sea levels rise, and put our nation's capital under water, should not the left be frantically trying to move our nation's federal district to Little Rock or Davenport?)

45 Don't wait for leftists to tell us that we need no more money for climate research (that is how they pay their pseudo-scientific toadies). Don't wait for leftists to address real ecological issues like Venice or the San Andreas Fault (those are far too real problems). Don't wait for leftists to depopulate their rich old centers of wealth and power on the coasts (that would actually cost the left power and wealth!).

Everything the left does is to hold forever its power, position, and wealth. The only "science" allowed is science that helps that unsavory greed. Leftist hypocrisy on climate change, like everything else, is utterly, absolutely corrupting.

San Francisco Chronicle, October 14, 2015
And right here is the memorial to stupidity

By Jon Carroll

I was woolgathering this morning, staring out at a plummeting hummingbird and thinking about stuff, when the topic of Confederate monuments crossed my mind. I don't spend a lot of time thinking about them -- it's not exactly a topic of concern in California -- and I'm not sure what got me started.

So something occurred to me. I'm not sure if I believe it or not; let me just play devil's advocate and see where that gets us.

I understand why people find Civil War monuments offensive, yes, I do. They seem to be saying: Hooray for the upholders of racism! Three cheers for the guys who loved slavery more than their own lives! I get that point. And I agree that such race-baiting effusions as the Confederate battle flag should be banned like swastikas; some wounds are just too deep.

On the other hand, I am reminded of the toppling of the statue of Saddam Hussein. That was a public relations stunt, conceived and executed by Americans; no grateful Iraqis were involved in the dethroning. Perhaps the Iraqis weren't that grateful after all.

I understand that toppling statues is an almost obligatory ritual. A new guy comes in, topples the statue of the old guy and announces his sway over the city, state or regional protectorate. Then it happens again. Topple, topple, topple. Not much changes except the statues; still, the ritual continues.

But it's not as if Saddam Hussein didn't happen. He was part of Iraqi history, even if "Iraq" is an artificial construct that will not last the century. He was there. He's part of what we need to know in order to understand the region. History always produces useful warnings.

Hard to decipher them sometimes; I acknowledge that. Still: better to know than not to know.

The Confederacy is a real thing. It was the culmination of social trends 300 years old -- or more, if we go back to the ancient history of slavery in, say, the Old Testament. Not only did the war happen, but the creepy nostalgia for the losers of that war happened. The impulse that led to the building of all those monuments was (and is) a real thing.

If we erase that from the public memory, we have lost an (as they say) opportunity for growth. We'd be in danger of driving the old stories underground, blocking a way of making the current conundrums clearer. The world is awash with statues and plaques and temples to people who owned slaves, or killed women, or put entire cities to the sword. I mean, if Julius Caesar gets a nod, why not Stonewall Jackson? Napoleon and not Lee?

I agree that we should have monuments to the enslaved. (Have you seen the museum in Cincinnati? Astonishing stuff.) I agree that culture should be celebrated; I believe those stories should be told. But I think American history is filled with stories, and they should all be heard.

The only way that the "fighting for chivalry and the Southern way of life" narrative can be undermined is with another narrative. Repressing the truth hardly ever works; it just makes it more glamorous and more alluring.

It's sort of like the Islamic State destroying all those ancient monuments because they were built to honor gods other than Allah -- even though Allah hadn't been invented or discovered yet. Is the worry that people will go back to worshipping Baal unless the temples are destroyed? That's a pretty insecure form of Islam, isn't it?

So is the argument about Confederate monuments that they will somehow serve as consolation to Southern white racists? But consideration of honor and chivalry do not seem to be part of the conversation. Pictures of Jeff Davis are not waved at Huckabee rallies.

Basically, the current neo-Confederacy movement is all about hating Obama. There are plenty of good reasons for disliking Obama's policies, but just-because-he's-black is not one of them. And yet that's where the legacy of the Civil War can be most clearly seen. Why do the people who benefit from Obamacare often dislike it anyway? Because race-baiting is powerful.

Is your situation wretched? Blame the blacks! As opposed to, say, the politicians you elected to make your lives better. You might think it has something to do with "socialism," but actually it's just race hatred. Unpacking the past to illuminate the present is an ancient activity. If we deny the past, the present becomes a mystery.

So maybe we should stop spending money relocating statues and start spending it on, I dunno, reparations. Or a decent public school system. Or voting rights. When all you're fighting about is symbols, the battle is certain to become symbolic. And we have a little too much of that already.

The Boston Globe, March 30, 2016

The fury on US campuses — and the awakening, by Byron White

As an African American undergraduate journalism major at a predominantly white, public university in the early 1980s, I faced my share of racial discrimination. I still remember vividly, as a sophomore reporter for the school newspaper, being denied by my student editor the opportunity to cover the Student Senate beat because the newly elected class president was black. The assumption was that my reporting necessarily would be biased because of our shared racial heritage. Never mind that white students had covered white student body presidents for years, presumably with total objectivity.

When my black classmates learned of this blatantly racist rebuff their advice was simple: Let's go start our own paper. When I told my grandfather what happened, his counsel was equally direct: "Well, I guess that means you're going to have to be the editor then."

I took my grandfather's advice. It was not easy to win over my white peers and professors, but I left Ohio University as the school's first black editor.

Those were the options back then. Black students understood that predominantly white universities were hostile toward us. We could respond two ways. Reject the system and create our own parallel universe where our talents and skills would be appreciated. Or engage the system and endure the long struggle of conforming it from the inside.

The student protesters who are dominating the news through their activism on college campuses like Harvard, Yale, Brown, Princeton, Boston College, Northeastern, Smith, Tufts, Emerson, Berklee College of Music, and the University of Missouri today are demanding a third way: Make the system work for all of us. Right now.

Gone are the demands for accommodations that would allow students of color to cope in an otherwise unwelcoming environment. Rather, students are demanding that university administrators like myself change the institution systemically, at its very core, so that it is fundamentally, not selectively, inclusive.

Rather than asking for a black faculty member to teach black studies, they want the entire faculty to be more diverse. Instead of scholarships for black students, they are asking for a more accessible admissions process. Rather than protection from hostility, they want a hostile-free university.

Why shouldn't they? This is a generation that grew up with a black president. They create music that is no longer defined by whether it "crosses over" to other audiences, but instead is infused into every genre, blurring the lines of traditional categories. They see a world that has adopted their language and their style, where the biggest hit on Broadway, *Hamilton*, features the Founding Fathers portrayed by blacks and Latinos.

These students imagine a truly multicultural campus, one that not only does not exclude them, but necessarily includes them. It is an audacious outlook that assumes there is no such thing as authentic university life without their full participation. They do not want a place in it. They want to set its rules.

As thousands of students prepare to make decisions this spring about where they will go to school in the fall, more are anticipating that they will participate in demonstrations on their campuses. A new study by UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute found that one in 10 full-time, first-year college students said they expect to protest while in college, the highest percentage in 50 years. African Americans and Latinos were most likely to express a commitment to activism. However, more than 40 percent of all students said that helping to promote racial understanding is either an "essential" or "very important" personal goal.

This can be frustrating for those of us who have never witnessed the kind of multicultural reality students are demanding or who never believed that it could exist or even resisted its emergence. The old vanguard that has led civil rights battles over the years lament that these students' form of activism, while loud and animated, seems to lack the resilience and strategic focus required to stimulate systemic change. Meanwhile, university administrators who believed they had addressed every form of racial demand over the years find these protesters impulsive and unsophisticated, without a clue of just how complicated such change can be.

Perhaps these students' expectation that change should happen immediately in the precise manner that they are demanding is a bit naïve. However, the expectation is legitimate. Higher education should have gotten this right by now. We have foolishly settled for incremental progress and symptomatic solutions when it comes to equity and inclusion rather than true institutional transformation. Now, we have a generation of students showing up on our campuses who expected us to be much further along and they are outraged by our neglect.

Ultimately, if we are to move forward, administrators must demonstrate the willingness to enlist these students into legitimate roles as coproducers of new practices that will define higher education's future. They, in turn, will have to turn their outrage into constructive action – and maybe even demonstrate a bit of patience while doing so.

For now, we must endure their fury and receive it as an awakening. It's about time.

Byron White is vice president for university engagement and chief diversity officer at Cleveland State University. He is a research associate at the Kettering Foundation and serves on the Advisory Board of the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism at Ohio University.

Northern Powerhouse project threatened by 'brain drain'

Andrew Bounds in Manchester and Chris Tighe in Newcastle, *Financial Times*, April 18, 2016

A "brain drain" is threatening government efforts to revitalise the economy of the north as people in their twenties head to London, research from KPMG shows. The consultancy has analysed the movement of young workers from northern England to the south-east and concluded that, unless it is reversed, the government will fail to establish a Northern Powerhouse, the project espoused by George Osborne, the chancellor.

Jon Turton, a partner at KPMG in Leeds, said: "This is the biggest issue facing the Northern Powerhouse. How do you attract and retain people in their twenties and thirties? You cannot rebalance the economy unless you rebalance the population."

Since the population of the north is older and poorer, it places a heavier burden on the region's health and welfare systems and makes it harder for employers to recruit, he added. While some would always flock to the "bright lights" of the capital, business could do more to offer the same opportunities in regional cities.

PwC, a rival professional services firm, recently ran advertisements encouraging applications to positions outside the capital. It is struggling to fill regional vacancies, but applications for roles in London are up 17 per cent on the previous year.

London's high housing costs have persuaded a trickle of workers to leave the capital and seek jobs in the Midlands and the north; in many cases, those people are returning to their hometowns and cities. But the majority decide to relocate to the furthest suburbs of the capital or into the Home Counties and commute.

In 2014, more than 66,300 people in their twenties moved out of northern England while almost 42,500 moved in, the Office for National Statistics said.

Mr Turton, who analysed the ONS data, found the number of 25- to 34-year-olds in Lancashire fell by more than 10 per cent between 1993 and 2013. Areas such as Liverpool city region, West Yorkshire and Hull also had declines. London, by contrast, had an increase of more than one-third. From 2013-33, Mr Turton has forecast declines in the number of 25 to 34-year-olds in all big northern cities except Leeds and Sheffield.

This is partly because of falling birth rates in the 1990s and 2000s. During the next two decades, the over-65 population is forecast to shoot up by more than 50 per cent in almost every big city, including the capital. However, according to the forecasts London's population of 25- to 34-year-olds will be roughly static.

The ONS reported last year that the north's share of England's population had fallen to 27.9 per cent: 15.1m people living in the combined north-east, north-west and Yorkshire and the Humber regions, its lowest level since 1821.

But the population shift is also because London holds the promise of more and better jobs and a more exciting life. Among graduates, the problem is particularly acute: in Yorkshire, for example, 15 graduates leave for London for each one that heads the other way.

Katie, 25, from the north-east and a former student at Leeds university who did not want to give her surname, is one who headed south: 'In Leeds I was unemployed for three months; when I moved to London I got a job within a week' (Katie, 25, University of Leeds graduate).

Initially she worked on a zero-hours contract. Now she has a six-month internship which will pay her £7,800. Her flat costs her £700 a month and she has to pay for travel. But, she says: "In Leeds I was unemployed for three months; when I moved to London I got a job within a week."

Lord O'Neill, commercial secretary to the Treasury and the minister charged with making the Northern Powerhouse a reality, has mooted a scheme where cities would pay off some of the debts of graduates who stayed to work there for at least three to five years.

But David Postings, chief executive of Bibby Financial Services, a company based in Oxfordshire which lends to small businesses, said more drastic action was needed, including business tax breaks to encourage people to invest in the regions and thus create jobs. Mr Postings, who grew up in Wolverhampton in the industrial West Midlands, added: "All my friends' kids have voted with their feet and left. It is the same for towns like Blackburn and Bolton. If we do not reverse that we would have to abandon those towns, and that would be a shame."

Back to the Big Society in a reformed Tory future

Danny Kruger, *Financial Times*, May 20, 2016

"We need a more social approach." This quiet suggestion, somewhere in the middle of David Cameron's recent speech on "life chances", takes me back to the start. Ten years ago, when Mr Cameron was the new leader of the opposition and I was his speech writer, this was his anthem. We talked of "social responsibility" and (in contrast to the dreary economics of Gordon Brown) "it's society, stupid". The Big Society, with its ominous capitals (watch out when they capitalise a social policy), was the fulfilment of the rhetoric of those glad days.

In office, Mr Cameron has suffered the awkward tension of Conservative politicians who believe in "society" not "the state" yet sit at the heart of government: like woodsmen put to work in a laboratory. His approach has been twofold. As far as possible he has sought to let nature in to the sterile public sector: opening up education and welfare to challenge by independent providers, mostly charities. But most of his effort has been about making the state work better: simplifying welfare and aligning incentives to employment, and bringing academic rigour and professional accountability to state schools.

Now, as Mr Cameron looks to his twilight years, between the EU referendum and his resignation some time before the 2020 election, his reforming tide has reached the great bastions of state responsibility: care and prisons. For here, as Mr Cameron is fond of saying about the care system, the state stands in *loco parentis*: the prime minister is responsible, night and day, for 70,000 children without a home of their own and 85,000 adults in custody.

The government's approach so far (led by Michael Gove, the justice secretary, who himself was adopted as a baby) is more state than society. The Queen's Speech, setting out the legislative programme for the next 12 months, heralded an extension of the government's parental role, with the commitment to provide a personal adviser for care-leavers up to age 25, and a new regulator to improve professional standards among social workers.

In the prison service, Mr Gove is importing the principles he applied to schools as education secretary in the last parliament: greater autonomy for local leaders (headteachers/prison governors) and a focus on results, which in prison terms means a reduction in re-offending. This includes an extension of prison, using satellite tagging to keep offenders under virtual lock and key while they live at home and go to work.

It is remarkable how quickly (and quietly) Mr Gove has changed the direction of British penal policy. The purpose of prison, he announced in a speech earlier this month, is rehabilitation — not punishment, not incapacitation, not deterrence. He has even written the word "redemption" into the National Offender Management Service's business plan.

Mr Cameron has a commitment to good parenting and the prevention of domestic violence. This needs developing

But this is not enough. Certainly we need to get better at looking after children in care. Certainly we need to get better at reforming prisoners. But the real need is to prevent young people going into care or prison in the first place. And for that, "we need a more social approach".

To stop children becoming wards of government — at a cost of £50,000 a year — we need to pay attention to the causes of family breakdown. Mr Cameron has a commitment to good parenting and the prevention of domestic violence. This needs developing, plus a major expansion of programmes like Safe Families which, resourced largely through churches' volunteer networks, offer support to families in crisis.

Overall, we need to make better use of the informal economy of kinship, neighbourhood and voluntary association, the natural assets of a community which are its real resource, not the systems and spending of the public sector. Across the country this old-new idea is taking root, like the West London Zone for Children and Young People (which I help lead), co-ordinating local charities to support the 20 per cent of children most at risk.

In penal policy, too, we need a stronger focus on what the community can do. In Japan, almost all 50,000 probation officers are volunteers called *hogoshi* — committed citizens, trained and supervised, and free to the taxpayer. We do not need to go the whole *hogoshi* here, but Britain has many civic-minded individuals and organisations keen to support Mr Gove's revolution.

The revolution is happening anyway, driven by voluntary and commercial energy.

[...]

Dallas Morning News

\$20 and change: Abolitionist Harriet Tubman replaces Andrew Jackson on U.S. currency

By Martin Crutsinger

April 20, 2016

1 Harriet Tubman, an African-American abolitionist who was born a slave, will stand with
George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and Benjamin Franklin among the iconic faces of U.S.
currency. The \$20 bill will be redesigned with Tubman's portrait on the front, marking two historic
5 milestones, Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew announced Wednesday. Tubman will become the first
African-American on U.S. paper money and the first woman to be depicted on currency in 100 years.
The leader of the Underground Railroad will replace the portrait of Andrew Jackson, the nation's
seventh president and a slave owner, who will be pushed to the back of the bill.

10 Lew also settled a backlash that had erupted after he had announced an initial plan to remove
Alexander Hamilton, the nation's first Treasury secretary, from the \$10 bill in order to honor a woman
on the bill. Hamilton will remain on the \$10 note, Lew said. Instead, the Treasury building on the back
of the bill will be changed to commemorate a 1913 march that ended on the steps of the Treasury
building that featured suffragette leaders Lucretia Mott, Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth
Cady Stanton and Alice Paul.

15 The back of the \$20, which now shows the White House, will be redesigned to include the
White House and Jackson, whose statue stands across the street in Lafayette Park. The \$5 bill will
also undergo change: The illustration of the Lincoln Memorial on the back will be redesigned to honor
"events at the Lincoln Memorial that helped to shape our history and our democracy." The new image
on the \$5 bill will include civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., who gave his famous "I have a
20 dream" speech on the steps of the memorial in 1963 and Marian Anderson and Eleanor Roosevelt.
Anderson, an African-American opera singer, gave a concert at the memorial in 1939 after she had
been blocked from singing at the then-segregated Constitution Hall. The Lincoln Memorial concert
was arranged by Mrs. Roosevelt.

25 An online group, Women on 20s, said it was encouraged that Lew was responding to its
campaign to replace Jackson with a woman. But it said it wouldn't be satisfied unless Lew committed
to issuing the new \$20 bill at the same time that the redesigned \$10 bill is scheduled to be issued in
2020. Lew didn't go that far Wednesday. But he pledged that at least the designs for all three bills will
be accelerated so they'll be finished by 2020 — the 100th anniversary of passage of the 19th
30 amendment giving women the right to vote. He said the new notes will go into circulation as fast as
possible after that, consistent with the need to incorporate new anti-counterfeiting measures in the
designs. Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen, the first woman to head the central bank, said she
welcomed the decision to honor the achievements of women in American history. She said the Fed
would work closely with Treasury to get the new bills developed and into circulation.

35 U.S. currency has undergone upgrades over the years to stay ahead of counterfeiters. But the
updates proposed by Lew for the three bills would be the most sweeping changes since 1929, when all
U.S. paper money was redesigned to feature more standard designs and a smaller size to save printing
costs. Lew had initially selected the \$10 bill to feature a woman because under the original timetable it
was the next bill to be redesigned. But that proposal met fierce objections from supporters of
Hamilton, who is enjoying renewed popular interest with the smash Broadway hit musical
"Hamilton."

40 Tubman, who was born into slavery in the early part of the 19th century, escaped and then
used the network of anti-slavery activists and safe houses known as the Underground Railroad to
transport other slaves to freedom. After the Civil War, Tubman, who died in 1913, became active in
the campaign for women's suffrage. Numerous groups have been campaigning to have a woman
honored on the nation's paper currency, which has been an all-male domain for more than a century.
45 Amrita Myers, a historian at Indiana University, said honoring Tubman was appropriate. "Not only is
this going to be the first African-American historical figure on U.S. currency, but it's a woman
specifically from the era of slavery," Myers said.

50 Wednesday's announcement helped mark a decades-long decline in the reputation of Jackson,
once a pillar of the modern Democratic Party but now often defined by his ownership of slaves and the
"Trail of Tears" saga that forcibly removed American Indians from their land. [...]

The lies of meritocratic Britain

Nick Cohen, *The Spectator*, 24 May 2016

In England after the Norman Conquest the worst insults you could throw were class insults. So long has feudal prejudice survived that we unconsciously echo the Anglo-Norman aristocracy when we use 'villainous' (from villien) and 'churlish' (from 'churl').

The churl of the 1300s might have reflected that, however miserable his life, it was not his fault that he had been born into servitude. His suffering was the result of an unjust society not a real reflection of his worth. No one shouts 'churl' or 'rustic' or 'villien' today. We live in a meritocratic country and feudalism is long gone except for a few gaudy spectacles around the monarch. So they shout 'loser' instead.

Everyone had a chance, today's elite implies. Everyone was behind the same starting line in the race for the top. You fought and you lost. You've no one to blame but yourself. From 'Tory' to 'suffragette', history is full of insults that have been appropriated by their targets. But no insult has had such a perverted appropriation as 'meritocracy'.

Its originator, Michael Young did not mean it as a compliment when he coined the word in 1958. His satire *The Rise of the Meritocracy* may not match Orwell and Huxley but he realised his dystopic vision well enough. Young's future was a world where the people at the top did not believe they were there because of birth or good luck, but because they were George Osborne's strivers. All sense of noblesse oblige would vanish in the new and insufferable smugocracy, Young warned. Those beneath the elite would feel that they were not held down because of class or lack of opportunity, but because they had failed. They would not be the victims of an unfair world, but of their own weakness and stupidity.

You could wear the badge of 'peasant' or 'prole' with pride. Once you might have claimed to be a working-class hero. But there is nothing heroic about being a loser.

The fate of Young's meritocracy is instructive. Meant as a warning, our rulers took it as a manifesto. Businessmen and financiers announced that they were meritocrats and deserved every bonus they awarded themselves. Tony Blair and David Cameron announced that they wanted Britain to be more meritocratic. As for the poor, as Young reflected just before his death in 2002,

They can easily become demoralised by being looked down on so woundingly by people who have done well for themselves. It is hard indeed in a society that makes so much of merit to be judged as having none. No underclass has ever been left as morally naked as that.

That we are not a meritocracy ought to be obvious. A true meritocracy would resemble a type of communism. To ensure no child had an unfair advantage and only innate talent flourished, the state would ban parental bequests, and remove all children from their parents to communal hostels, as in Plato's Republic.

Our society uses the language of equality to hide class advantage, as James Bloodworth illustrates in *The Myth of the Meritocracy: Why Working-Class Kids Still Get Working-Class Jobs*. It is a smashing little book, confidently written, well-researched and a grim pleasure to read. Bloodworth works in the media as I do. Whatever discontents our trade brings, it helps you see through the lies Britain tells itself. What was once a career for bright 18-year-olds with good A-Levels, now requires you to take out a loan for a BA, pay, without a student loan, for a post-graduate qualification, which in most instances will be useless, work for free as an intern, and then, unless you are very lucky, work for very little for years thereafter. You cannot do it without rich parents. Nor, unless you are very lucky will you thrive in the law, military, medicine, and many other professions, which carry on as if the 20th century never happened. (Who your parents were, interestingly, matters far less in science, accountancy, engineering, and technology; presumably because, unlike judges and generals, scientists can tell the difference between being good at your job and good company at a dinner party.)

New Labour's emphasis on education was meant to offer a way out of the class system. But the universities have merely replicated existing divisions. Only 17 per cent of students at Russell Group universities are from the lower classes, while 31 per cent are the children of the wealthy. Children from poorer families go to the poorer universities, which in a cruel deceit, burden them with the same debts as Oxford and Cambridge. The privileges and burdens of the parent become the privileges and burdens of the child. The old class system is thriving, all that has changed is its ability to hide itself behind the language of egalitarianism.

Theresa May's immigration speech was as tawdry as it was contemptible

Alex Massie, *The Spectator*, 6 October 2015

London, eh? What a ghastly place. A seething, impenetrable, web of humanity. A vast, choking, metropolis that is, once again, one of the dark places of the world. A vision of hell, frankly.

That, at any rate, would appear to be what Theresa May, the Home Secretary, thinks. If she did not think this, if she did not consider the capital a multi-coloured blot on the face of modern Britain, she would not, I assume, have alleged this morning that *"When immigration is too high, when the pace of change is too fast, it's impossible to build a cohesive society."*

There is, she added, *"no case, in the national interest, for immigration of the scale we have experienced over the last decade."* If only Britain had enjoyed, for the last five years, a Home Secretary capable of getting a grip on this apparent problem. So Mrs May, when are you resigning?

For that matter, were you wrong when you said, as recently as March this year, that British virtues – though they are not uniquely British – of tolerance and liberalism were the means by which *"we have made our multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-religious society succeed"*?

And is the Prime Minister wrong when he said, as recently as July, that

'Over generations, we have built something extraordinary in Britain: a successful multi-racial, multi-faith democracy. It's open, diverse, welcoming – these characteristics are as British as queuing and talking about the weather. It is here in Britain where different people, from different backgrounds who follow different religions and different customs don't just rub alongside each other but are relatives and friends; husbands, wives, cousins; neighbours and colleagues.

It is here in Britain where in one or two generations people can come with nothing and rise as high as their talent allows. It is here in Britain where success is achieved not in spite of our diversity, but because of our diversity. So as we talk about the threat of extremism and the challenge of integration, we should not do our country down'.

I suggest that there is a certain tension between bemoaning 'runaway' immigration and saluting the great, equally 'runaway', success of London. You cannot have it both ways. London, in particular, is great because, not despite, of its diversity. The problem of London exceptionalism is that the rest of the country is not more like London.

Unless, of course, you're a Home Secretary pandering to the basest elements of the Tory party. A Home Secretary basing her pitch to lead her party on a stale and noxious concoction of tawdry nativism. In that case, in those circumstances, you are licenced to present a picture of Britain as a country on the brink of an abyss, in which hordes – or swarms – of migrants are undermining the British way of life, threatening social cohesion and tearing up whatever remains of whatever you mean by our 'social fabric'. A country that is falling, in other words.

But it is piffle and dangerous claptrap at that. Because while it is undoubtedly reasonable to observe that migration – whether internal or external – can have costs as well as benefits, it is also reasonable to demand that our politicians talk about these matters in ways that dampen, not enflame, voters' concerns.

Those concerns, it should be admitted, are real even if they are also, unsurprisingly, most keenly expressed in areas that, by and large, have experienced relatively little migration. The more immigrants a Briton knows or encounters the more probable it is they will take a liberal line on immigration. Just fancy that.

And, again, if Britain really is – as Conservative ministers repeatedly assure us – a great trading nation, open to the world, it follows that this openness be reflected in its attitude to the movement of people as well as capital.

We have heard it all before, in any case. Each and every wave of immigration, of whatever size, has been accompanied by howls of nativist protest. The Irish experienced it; so did post-war immigrants from the Caribbean. As did the Ugandan Asians and the Pakistanis. Now it's the Poles and Romanians.

In each instance, the apocalypse was mysteriously averted. The sky remained unfallen. Britain – and especially England – changed and carried on and, mostly, did so with remarkably little fuss. By the standards of most European countries, British politics is startlingly moderate. There is no Jobbik, no True Finns, no Swedish Democrats, no Golden Dawn. Ukip, however much you might dislike Mr Farage, are pikers in comparison to any of these continental parties.

There is something comforting about this. It should serve as a reminder that, actually, Britain remains a pretty remarkable place. It is not broken, it is, in fact, a strikingly successful country in which the great majority of people lead lives of tolerable prosperity and modest contentment. [...]

USA Today

Military will open all combat jobs to women, Defense secretary announces

By Tom Vanden Brook and Jim Michaels

December 3, 2015

1 All U.S. military combat jobs, including infantry units and special operations, will be open to women beginning next year, Defense Secretary Ash Carter announced Thursday. Carter said the decision was part of his commitment to build a force of the future. The ban will be lifted in 30 days, he said, and the services have until April 1 to accommodate women in all roles. "In the 21st Century, that
5 requires drawing strength from the broadest pool" possible, he said, adding that the Pentagon can't successfully defend the nation by eliminating half of the U.S. population from combat roles.

The decision was immediately blasted by Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., and a member of the Armed Services Committee as a politically motivated move that will erode the ability of the military to fight. Hunter pointed to a study done by the Marine Corps that showed that infantry units with women
10 performed worse than all-male ones. "No. 1, this is being done for political reasons," Hunter said. "What is it going to do to our ability to be lethal at the small-unit level? It degrades that ability."

The armed services had been given a Dec. 31 deadline to allow women into all of its units, including elite special operations ground combat position, or to request a waiver. Those exceptions had to be backed by data showing why women would not be able to accomplish the necessary tasks.
15 Carter acknowledged that the Marines asked for some exceptions, Carter said, "but we are a joint force." "There will be no exceptions," Carter said. Carter appeared alone at the Pentagon briefing room to make the announcement. Absent was Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and who had been Marine Corps Commandant prior to his promotion. Under Dunford, the Marines had requested to keep 48,779 slots open to men only. Dunford was not at the briefing, Carter said,
20 because the decision to open all jobs to women was his.

The Marine Corps said it would comply with the order. "The Marine Corps has received the secretary's decision and will immediately commence the process of further implementing the policy change, to include sharing plans and lessons learned with the other services," the service said in a statement. "We remain steadfast in our commitment to ensure the men and women who earn the title
25 "Marine" will be ready to fight and win."

Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., and chairman of the Armed Services Committee, said in a statement that Congress will use the 30 days to review the implications of the decision. "Secretary Carter's decision to open all combat positions to women will have a consequential impact on our servicemembers and our military's warfighting capabilities," McCain said. "The Congress has an
30 essential constitutional role to make rules for the government and regulation of our nation's armed forces."

Dakota Meyer, who earned a Medal of Honor, the nation's highest award for bravery, as a Marine in Afghanistan, said he has some concerns about the Pentagon's decision. "In my opinion that decision was based on a political push and not a realistic thought-out study," Meyer said. He pointed
35 out that women have served effectively in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, but the Pentagon may not have done enough research into what impact integrating women will have on all-male units, such as the infantry. "Once again politicians aren't listening to their counterparts in the military," he said, referring to Carter's decision to reject the Marine Corps' request for a waiver.

There are 213,600 male-only jobs in the military in 52 specialties, most of them in infantry
40 units in the Army and Marine Corps. Many fields have been opening to women in the last year, including the Army's elite Ranger school, its premier light infantry course. Three women have passed the grueling tests and have earned coveted Ranger tab. Carter's decision comes almost three years after his predecessor Leon Panetta announced that he had lifted the two-decade ban that prevented women from most combat jobs. Since the start of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, more than 280,000 women
45 have served in those combat zones out of a total of almost 2.5 million troops, Pentagon records show. In both wars, 152 women have died from combat or non-combat causes, records show, and 958 have been wounded in action. [...]

The Chicago Tribune

Commentary

Obama directive on transgender students will inflame ill-informed 'bathroom warriors'

By Rex Huppke

May 13, 2016

1 Until recently, I didn't realize how much Americans care about their bathrooms.

 Lavatories, in terms of public perception, have risen from the outhouse to the penthouse and, given the clamor over who can or can't use a particular powder room, you'd think they had suddenly been declared sacred spaces. But don't worry. Things are about to get much, much worse.

5 On Friday, every school district in America received a letter from the Obama administration saying that all transgender students should be allowed to use the bathrooms that match their gender identity. As the New York Times reported: "It does not have the force of law, but it contains an implicit threat: Schools that do not abide by the Obama administration's interpretation of the law could face lawsuits or a loss of federal aid." Many conservatives have already gone apoplectic over the 10 Obama administration's opposition to North Carolina's recent anti-transgender bathroom law. This letter to the schools, signed by officials from the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Education, is going to make some people's pipes burst.

 It shouldn't, of course. The letter makes it clear that these accommodations should be made only if, per the New York Times report, "a child's parent or legal guardian asserts a gender identity for 15 the student that 'differs from previous representations or records.' While I'm sure protectors of the sanctity of bathrooms will conjure scenarios in which horny teen boys try to get into the girls washroom, those already unlikely scenarios become pure fiction with the caveat that a parent must confirm a student has come out as transgender. If you think a high school boy would ever jump through that many hoops to get into a girls bathroom, perhaps you should hop on the Internet and 20 Google "boobs." To those who honestly suggest transgender people of any age might be "faking it," let me ask this: Why would anyone fake that? Most people are not itching to be discriminated against and feared by people who are oddly protective of bathrooms.

 It's not just a dopey argument, it's a logical fallacy.

25 The real problem here is not that supporters of the North Carolina law or the people and politicians who, as you read this, will be flipping out over the administration's letter to school districts don't understand gender identity. The problem is that they don't want to understand gender identity. And that's rather absurd. It isn't a made-up concept. It's not a hoax concocted by a radical liberal cabal. It's accepted science. Gender identity is a person's inner sense of being male or female, or even 30 both or neither. Biological sex is different — it relates to a person's anatomy at birth. A small percentage of humans have gender identities inconsistent with their biological sex. If how you perceive yourself on the inside doesn't line up with what you see on the outside, mental anguish can ensue. It's not a joke. It's not something worthy of crass stereotypes drummed into bathroom-warrior talking points. You can say that God made man and woman, and that's that, but I'd argue that God 35 also gave men and women brains and the ability to learn and evolve and better understand their own diversity.

 What do you do by slamming the bathroom door on transgender people? You force them to live a life out of alignment. You push them to the fringes. You damage them. What damage befalls you when you open bathrooms to transgender people? If you replace your fear with a bit of understanding, none. A CNN/ORC poll released this week found that only 38 percent of Americans 40 agree with laws like the one in North Carolina, and even half of all Republicans oppose bathroom bills. When corporations, sports organizations, the federal government and a majority of Americans are OK with something and you're not, it's possible the world is moving on without you.

 The Obama administration's letter said: "As is consistently recognized in civil rights cases, the desire to accommodate others' discomfort cannot justify a policy that singles out and disadvantages a 45 particular class of students." That's why this matters. There are transgender kids and adults committing suicide at absurdly high rates, and that has much to do with feelings of fear and exclusion. Those lives are worth far more to me than anyone's squirmy, unmoored-from-reality washroom fears.

 And if you can't understand that, you're simply not trying.

The Atlantic

Obama Is Right to Go to Hiroshima, as an Act of 'Recognition' Rather Than 'Apology'

By James Fallows May 12, 2016

1 Barack Obama probably could not have gone to the atomic bomb memorial in Hiroshima any earlier in his presidency than now. That is the political reality. So primed have his critics been to cast any statement more complex than "USA! USA!" as part of a shameful "apology tour", that visiting a site of unavoidable moral complexity might have drowned out whatever else he tried to do.

5 I am glad that Obama is going there now, while still in office, so he can become the first serving U.S. president to do so. And for reasons that have nothing to do with today's nasty domestic politics, I am glad that he is emphasizing that his visit is an act of recognition, and responsibility, rather than "apology."

10 The *recognition* is that 71 years ago, above this broad river-delta land in western Japan, human beings took a step in warfare even more destructive than those of previous millennia, a step that in principle might lead to annihilation. Yes, war has always been hell. Yes, countless millions have died by sword and sling and siege and machine gun, including the very large numbers who perished in American firebombing of Japanese cities in the months before the atomic bomb. But to have read John Hersey's *Hiroshima*, as it seemed all school children of my Boomer-era vintage were required to do, was to recognize atomic weaponry as something different. My friend Walter Shapiro, with whom I worked at the *Washington Monthly* in the 1970s and who later went to Japan on a Japan Society fellowship as I did with my family, has a powerful new article in *RollCall* on how fear of nuclear catastrophe dominated the 1950s and 1960s, and how odd and dangerous it is to have grown blasé about the threat. This disproportion between hyper-awareness of terrorist dangers, and a routine acceptance of worldwide nuclear arsenals, is also the theme of the Global Zero movement.

20 The *responsibility* involves acknowledging that the human beings who took this fateful step were Americans, and the human beings who died in Hiroshima and then Nagasaki were mainly Japanese. ("Mainly" because some Koreans, Chinese, Allied prisoners of war, and other foreigners were present—especially in Nagasaki, long one of Japan's very few internationalized cities.) Acknowledging this responsibility says nothing about the people who died elsewhere in the war, or the Japanese, Americans, and others who might have been killed if the fighting had gone on. Their numbers are not knowable. We do know that the only nation to have suffered an atomic-bomb attack is Japan, and the only nation to have launched one is the United States. And Obama, 44th President of the United States, knows that the person who made the final decision to use the bombs was the 33rd President, Harry Truman.

30 Now, as for *apology*. The historical arguments over Truman's decision to drop two bombs have evolved, and will continue to do so. The starkest version of the pro-bomb case is exemplified by the late Paul Fussell's *Thank God for the Atomic Bomb*, published in the 1980s. Back in 1945, Fussell had been a U.S. Army infantry officer preparing to invade Japan. He argued, as many others have, that the atomic bombs "saved" more lives than they cost, by avoiding the need for invasion. Contrary views, advanced over the years in varying forms by Gar Alperovitz, Frederik Logevall, Robert Jay Lifton, Greg Mitchell, and others, plus many Japanese writers, include such arguments as: that the Japanese regime was about to surrender anyway; the bombings (especially the second) were more about impressing or deterring the Soviet Union than defeating Japan; that the likely casualties in an invasion have been overstated; that the U.S. could have set off a demonstration blast rather than a real one, or allowed more time after the first bombing, or in some other ways tried to avoid crossing this threshold. Obama is not going to resolve those arguments, nor should he try. That is one reason not to "apologize." [...]

Transparency over tax returns will not guarantee better government

William Hague, *The Daily Telegraph*, 11 April 2016

"Transparency is the answer," I said earnestly to the general secretary of the Vietnamese Communist Party a few years ago, when he asked me to how to tackle corruption inside his country.

It was an unlikely scene: a Conservative foreign secretary in Hanoi advising a top communist on corruption, with a vast statue of Ho Chi Minh looming over us.

"In Britain," I went on, "MPs' expenses are now published in full," giving an honourable mention to the work of *The Daily Telegraph*. "And even civil servants' credit card statements are put online."

I could tell that behind the general secretary's inscrutable expression his mind was boggling at the thought. Like many world leaders, he honourably desired a more open system of government than the opaque one over which he presided. The UK is far ahead of most countries in openness in government and dramatically less corrupt than the great majority of them.

This is for many reasons: we have a long history of independent institutions, relatively few appointments are subject to the whim of politicians, and our methods of decision-making involve large numbers of people and different government departments. Outside a few backwaters of local government, no one would get very far in Britain trying to make official policy for private profit, in sharp contrast to much of the rest of the world.

Of course, the latest furore and demand for greater transparency ignited by the Panama papers is not so much about the risk of corruption, as the issue of fairness – are political leaders paying their share of the taxes they levy on others? It is a legitimate question, and the answer, as with combating corruption, will inevitably lie in ever-greater transparency, with the publishing of the tax return of the Prime Minister and then other leading figures.

There is little point in anyone fighting such a trend: the 21st century has brought both the digital technology to enable the publication and analysis of huge amounts of data, and the lack of trust in leadership which requires more openness.

Yet if we are to expect to know more and more about the tax affairs and many other aspects of the lives of our leaders or potential leaders, we will have to receive that information in an open-minded way.

Societies can either idealise their leaders but keep some mystique and privacy around them, or they can know everything about them but not expect them to be perfect or "normal".

Take my own hero, William Pitt the Younger, who totally mismanaged and neglected his own financial affairs. The debts he had accumulated by the time of his death totalled, in today's money, some £2 million, and were written off by parliament – not something for which today's prime ministers can hope. Yet he was an undoubted genius in handling the finances of the country over a quarter of a century, brilliantly maintaining the credit and resources necessary to wage war against Napoleon.

Others have written about the complex tax affairs of Winston Churchill, which seem unlikely to have withstood the kind of scrutiny to which future prime ministers will now be subjected. Without maintaining his writing activities even during some busy times in office, and keeping his tax bill to the lowest legitimate amount, it is difficult to see how our greatest modern leader could have operated at all.

The same is true of medical records, which American presidential candidates now publish routinely. Could Roosevelt have given the US his indomitable leadership if people had known then he couldn't walk? What chance would Kennedy have stood if the state of his health, let alone his sex life, been known – and yet this was the man whose wisdom pulled the world back from the brink of nuclear war.

So if we are to know more about every aspect of those who aspire to govern us, and I am not arguing that we shouldn't, then we will have to understand and ultimately accept a crucial point: that these individuals will vary greatly in their background, circumstances and personalities and we should not jump to the conclusion that what we discover about them always reveals their ability to govern. [...]

A Brexit would break up Britain – and dismantle the Commonwealth too

Andrew Dewson, *The Independent*, Monday 30 May 2016

Have you ever tried to repair something only to end up throwing the whole thing into the dustbin? Brexiteers are campaigning to do just that with Britain. If a majority of Brits decide they want out of the European Union, all outcomes are possible. But there's one very real possibility that Brits are ignoring: that a vote in favour of a Brexit could conceivably lead to the breakup of Britain and then of the Commonwealth. Meanwhile, what remains of the British government in Westminster would be so handicapped it could do almost nothing about it.

The idea that a win for the Brexit campaign could result in Britain breaking up isn't new. However, Brexit supporters are willing to believe that everything will be rosy in the event of a Brexit victory, an optimistic view verging on 'pie in the sky'. The dismantling of Britain is a far more logical and likely outcome.

Assume that the current national polling within the UK is going to remain fairly accurate. That means the Brexit campaign can only win because a majority of English voters want out, while a majority of voters in Scotland, Northern Ireland and (possibly) Wales support remaining within the EU.

What next? The Scottish Nationalists will demand another independence vote. In fact, they are already doing just that.

Nicola Sturgeon has made no secret of her desire for another referendum should Britain choose to leave the EU. She has already argued, rightly, that the last independence referendum in Scotland was based on a background of Britain remaining a part of the EU.

With the backdrop changed so dramatically, based largely on English votes, the calls for another independence vote will be deafening. And this time the Scottish Nationalists know they will win.

Given a choice between leaping into the unknown handcuffed to England and remaining as part of a stable (if risky) European Union, Scots will take their chances with Europe. More than just avoiding a leap into the unknown, remaining as part of the EU while England leaves represents a once-in-a-lifetime economic opportunity for Scotland.

Every business that might consider leaving England for mainland Europe following a Brexit might instead consider moving to Scotland. Scotland will probably adopt the Euro as currency, is more conveniently situated for mainland Europe than Ireland and has a highly advanced renewable energy sector.

The numbers don't even need to be huge for Scotland to emerge as a big economic winner. If 5 per cent of American companies in the UK moved their European HQ north it would be a major economic windfall for the country.

Plenty of Brexit campaigners want Britain to remain whole; they argue that Scotland wouldn't become an automatic member of the EU and may not achieve favourable membership terms. But alternatively – and just as likely – the EU desperately, wanting to stick it to England, might fast track Scottish membership, granting the country very favourable terms indeed. Independence is tantalisingly within reach; Sturgeon must be willing the English to do their part.

But no matter what campaign dilemmas Sturgeon faces now, they will pale in comparison to those Prime Minister Boris Johnson will face – assuming, as most now do, that the Brexit campaign's figurehead becomes PM in the event of a Brexit win. He can't then beg the Scots to stay, having led a Brexit campaign based on national sovereignty and self-determination arguments; Scotland will go.

Where politics and religion have failed to unite Ireland in the past, EU economics might. Ulster has – and always has had – a far greater affinity with Scotland than with England. Ulster's loyalist identity is very much based on being a part of Britain. If Scotland leaves the UK then Britain no longer exists, will that identity remain strong as a part of England?

And where does that leave Ulster? A united Ireland might seem unlikely – the peace process is nothing if not fragile – the idea that Ulster's Protestant majority would be persecuted by a Catholic national majority is rooted in the past. Over the last 20 years Ireland has gone from being one of the most religiously repressed nations in Europe to one of the most socially liberal and progressive. Unity is possible.

Wales is the least likely to go it alone. Regardless, if England forces Wales out of the EU, calls for a Welsh independence will get louder.

Not all English people consider losing Scotland, Northern Ireland or Wales a problem; breaking up the UK may, for them, be just another reason to vote for Brexit. A set of dominoes may soon begin to fall. [...]

Why the British media is responsible for the rise in Islamophobia in Britain

Miqdaad Versi, *The Independent*, Monday 4 April 2016

Once again, a newspaper's integrity has been found wanting as the press regulator, IPSO, judged the *Daily Star Sunday's* headline, "UK mosques fundraising for terror", to be "significantly misleading" following a complaint lodged by myself. The paper clarified its error on page 2, noting that UK mosques were actually "not involved in any way". This came just a week after *The Sun* was forced to acknowledge that its headline "1 in 5 Brit Muslims' sympathy for jihadis" was similarly misleading.

Such inaccuracies are not restricted to the tabloid press. *The Times*, for example, claimed Muslims were "silent on terror". This allegation has since been unequivocally rebuffed not only by Home Secretary Theresa May but also by senior counter-terror officers such as Neil Basu and Scotland Yard's former anti-terror chief Richard Walton.

It's not just misleading stories which are the problem – we also consistently see articles conflating the faith of Islam with criminality, such as the headlines "Muslim sex grooming" or "Imam beaten to death in sex grooming town" – the latter of which resulted in the Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police being "appalled" and writing an open letter criticising the paper. Sensationalism and scaremongering about the apparent threat posed by Muslims is also widespread. Just look at headlines such as: "BBC puts Muslims before you" (*Daily Star*); "Halal secret of Pizza Express" (*The Sun*); "Muslim vote could decide 25 per cent of seats" (*Daily Mail*).

So what, you might say? We rightly live in a country that cherishes the freedom of the press, and it's not unreasonable for newspapers to use sensational headlines to sell papers. We know that there is an undeniable and serious threat from many groups identifying as Muslim that strike terror into the hearts of millions. But the inaccurate stories, as well as those that are re-framed to align with the far-right "othering" of Muslims, have real-world consequences.

Recent research by the University of Cambridge has shown that mainstream media reporting about Muslim communities is contributing to an atmosphere of rising hostility toward Muslims in Britain, corroborating the findings of an Islamophobia Roundtable in Stockholm two years ago. Claiming that the media has played no role in the growth in Islamophobia is no longer a tenable position.

More than half of Britons see Islam (the mainstream religion, not Islamist fundamentalist groups) as a threat to Western liberal democracy. Over 30 per cent of young children believe Muslims are 'taking over England' and hate crime against Muslims continues to rise, up by 70 per cent in the last year, according to the Metropolitan police.

Of course, the government needs to take the problem of Islamophobia seriously and we all need to hold the media to account better, reporting mistakes and inaccuracies. However, editors of newspapers also need to own up to this problem within the media and take meaningful steps to resolve it.

According to research presented at the Muslim News' Conference on reporting Islam last year, there have been improvements in the language that is being used, but religious illiteracy remains rife within parts of our newspaper elite. Special training for journalists working in areas touching on Islamic faith and culture, and guidelines for sensitive topics, are now a must-have for any serious paper. Research from City University in London shows a huge under-representation of Muslims in the media: less than 0.5 per cent of UK journalists are Muslim, compared to almost 5 per cent of the national population. This lack of diversity is likely to be further magnified at more senior positions. A more diverse workforce, however, is likely to improve coverage and reduce the likelihood of misreporting. I am aware of specific instances where the mere presence of Muslim journalists in editorial meetings made a real difference in ensuring more balanced reporting.

To improve diversity, there needs to be greater outreach on the part of media organisations to bring in talent from all backgrounds, through diversity programmes, paid internships and fast-track schemes to proactively close this gap.

Finally, given the apparent inability of the press to self-regulate, there needs to be more effective regulation. Stronger deterrents would prevent stories that are just plain wrong from making into print or online. Papers should not be able to get away with "clarifications" that do not admit wrongdoing without "due prominence". A significantly misleading front page headline needs to be corrected by an equally sized front page apology as well as a financial penalty.

I expect that the independent review of IPSO currently underway would cover these ideas and hope that all those interested, feed into that review. And, among many potential improvements to the Editor's Code of Practice, incorporating Recommendation 38 from Lord Leveson's report is a key way to help tackle the abuse of minority groups by some sections of the media: "The power to intervene in cases of allegedly discriminatory reporting, and in so doing reflect the spirit of equalities legislation". Avoiding regular smears about Islam or Muslims and the conflation of the faith of Islam with criminality is a simple request of fairness, not asking for favours. It is not too much to ask of the nation's editors.

The National Review

No Movement That Embraces Trump Can Call Itself Conservative

By Jonah Goldberg

September 5, 2015

1 [...] If I sound dismayed, it's only because I am. Conservatives have spent more than 60
years arguing that ideas and character matter. That is the conservative movement I joined and
dedicated my professional life to. And now, in a moment of passion, many of my comrades-in-
arms are throwing it all away in a fit of pique. Because "Trump fights!" How many Republicans
5 have been deemed unfit for the Oval Office because of comparatively minor character flaws or
ideological shortcomings? Rick Perry in 2012 saw his candidacy implode when he couldn't
remember the third item on his checklist of agencies he'd close down. Well, even in that "oops"
moment, Rick Perry comes off as Lincolnesque compared with Donald Trump.

10 Yes, I know Trump has declared himself pro-life. Good for him — and congratulations to
the pro-life movement for making that the price of admission. But I'm at a total loss to understand
why serious pro-lifers take him at his word. He's been all over the place on Planned Parenthood,
and when asked who he'd like to put on the Supreme Court, he named his pro-choice-extremist
sister. Ann Coulter wrote of Newt in 2011: "If all you want is to lob rhetorical bombs at Obama
and then lose, Newt Gingrich — like recent favorite Donald Trump — is your candidate. But if
15 you want to save the country, Newt's not your guy." Now Ann leads a chorus of people claiming
that Trump is our only savior. Has Trump changed, or have Ann and her followers? Is there a
serious argument behind the new thinking, or is it "because he fights!"?

20 It is entirely possible that conservatives sweat the details of tax policy too much. Once in
office, a president must deal with political realities that render the fine print of a campaign
pamphlet as useful as a battle plan after the enemy is met. But in the last month, Trump has
contemplated a flat tax, the fair tax, maintaining the current progressive tax system, a carried-
interest tax, a wealth tax, and doing nothing. His fans respond, "That shows he's a pragmatist!"
No. It shows that he has absolutely no ideological guardrails whatsoever. Ronald Reagan once
said, "Government is like a baby. An alimentary canal with a big appetite at one end and no sense
25 of responsibility at the other." Trump is close to the reverse. He's a mouth at the wrong end of an
alimentary canal spewing crap with no sense of responsibility. In his embarrassing interview with
Hugh Hewitt Thursday night, Trump revealed he knows less than most halfway-decent D.C.
interns about foreign policy. Twitter lit up with responses about how it doesn't matter and how it
was a gotcha interview. They think that Trump's claim that he'll just go find a Douglas MacArthur
30 to fix the problem is brilliant. Well, I'm all in favor of finding a Douglas MacArthur, but if you
don't know anything about foreign policy, the interview process will be a complete disaster. Yes,
Reagan delegated. But he knew enough to know to whom to delegate.

35 If you want a really good sense of the damage Donald Trump is doing to conservatism,
consider the fact that for the last five years no issue has united the Right more than opposition to
Obamacare. Opposition to socialized medicine in general has been a core tenet of American
conservatism from Day One. Yet, when Republicans were told that Donald Trump favors single-
payer health care, support for single-payer health care jumped from 16 percent to 44 percent. I've
written a lot about my problems with populism. One of my favorite illustrations of why the
populist mindset is dangerous and anti-intellectual comes from William Jennings Bryan. "The
40 people of Nebraska are for free silver and I am for free silver," Bryan announced. "I will look up
the arguments later." My view of conservatism holds that if free silver is a bad idea, it's still a bad
idea even if the people of Nebraska are for it. But Trumpism flips this on its head. The
conservatives of Nebraska and elsewhere should be against single-payer health care, even if
Donald Trump is for it. What we are seeing is the corrupting of conservatives. [...]

Beyond June 23rd

The Remain campaign must outlive the referendum

May 30th 2016, *The Economist* by BAGEHOT

[...] However decisive any Remain win (the Brexiteers are claiming 60% is the minimum the prime minister must achieve to avoid revolt) it is unlikely that the Europe question will vanish. The Leave campaign will do everything it can to claim the public was misled and will demand a new referendum. Every future European summit will ignite the Conservative Party's nervous system. It may well elect a pro-Brexit leader as Mr Cameron's successor. Pandering to such sentiments will only strengthen them, and convince their propagators that they were right all along.

Yet if he wins—whatever the margin; ignore Brexiteer nonsense about 59% for Remain somehow not counting—Mr Cameron will have a pro-European mandate. Stronger In, the official anti-Brexit outfit, has campaigned on the premise that Britain should not just stay in the EU but work to make it better. The prime minister will have the responsibility to make good on that pledge. Moreover, he will have the opportunity. Britain's voice in Brussels has been weakened by the build-up to the referendum. But the process of renegotiation strengthened Mr Cameron's personal relationship with his fellow leaders. And a Remain victory (especially at a time when the EU is struggling in other respects) will prove to his partners Mr Cameron can persuade and deliver. However fleetingly, he will be a winner.

So to make the most of this opportunity, make good on his campaign promises and help quell talk of a second referendum, the prime minister must, on any Remain win, launch a British initiative to make Europe more dynamic. Brexiteers talk of June 24th as "independence day". If they lose, Mr Cameron must make it "interdependence day": using the momentum the result generates to promote necessary reforms that would make Europe work better for Britain and its neighbours: completing the single market in services, cutting red tape and advancing the TTIP negotiations.

This would start with Mr Cameron taking some time from calming his backbenchers in Westminster to tour Europe's capitals to build a new alliance for reform with Britain at its hub—building on his previous "renegotiation" charm offensive, but this time more collaborative and long-termist. In the likes of Matteo Renzi, Emmanuel Macron, Angela Merkel, as well as Britain's traditional allies in the Nordic and Baltic regions, Mr Cameron has natural allies. At the same time he could launch initiatives to boost Britain's structural influence in Brussels. More British graduates and top civil servants could be encouraged and supported to apply for jobs in the institutions. To raise the standard of Britain's MEPs, Mr Cameron could establish an "A-list" of talented Conservatives ahead of selections for the European Parliament election in 2019 (and encourage Labour to do the same). Downing Street could get a proper European department to improve the quality and quantity of EU advice available to the prime minister.

Nonetheless, the prime minister cannot be expected to do this alone. It will take a popular initiative to support him when he does the right thing and chide him when he gives in to the Eurosceptics. Fortunately, such a body—cross-party, decentralised and united by its commitment to an effective, energetic British role in Europe—will already exist on June 24th: the Remain campaign. From its leadership to its local groups, in Britain and abroad, this is a ready-made, non-partisan network, backed by donors large and small, capable of insisting forcefully on greater British engagement and assertiveness on the continent. It will be too easy for a Remain win to be hollow: for noisy Eurosceptic campaigners successfully to spin it as a betrayal, for the pro-European alliances built up over the past months to disintegrate and for the mandate to "stay in and make it better" to go forgotten.

And what if Leave wins? In that case, all the more reason for its opponents to stick together. What Britain would or should look like outside the EU is unclear. The range of trade-offs that Britons will have to navigate is conveyed by the number of different "models" the Brexiteers have cited: Norway, Switzerland, Canada, Albania... Will freedom of movement continue? What status will EU citizens in Britain have? What sort of trading relationship will Britain have with its neighbours, and at what regulatory cost? The differences between the different possible visions of a post-Brexit country are huge and will need debating. That demands intense political effort from those committed to keeping Britain as relevant and engaged in Europe as possible, one that the existing Stronger In campaign will, even in defeat, be perfectly placed to orchestrate. With luck, it will not come to that. But whatever the result on June 23rd, Remain must fight on

The UK Independence Party: Unrisen fruitcakes

Dec 12th 2015 | *The Economist*

The populist right is surging across Europe, but UKIP trails in its wake

FROM Finland to Hungary to the Netherlands, populist, Eurosceptic, anti-immigrant and far-right parties are on the rise. In France Marine Le Pen's National Front did so spectacularly in the recent regional elections that some fear she could even win the presidential election in 2017. Britain is soon to hold a referendum on its European Union membership, a prospect that ought similarly to boost the UK Independence Party, which was founded to campaign for Brexit. But it has not turned out that way: although the party once dismissed by David Cameron as bunch of "fruitcakes" saw a surge in its popularity two years ago, UKIP has since remained stuck on around 15% in the polls.

Worse, a much-ballyhooed breakthrough in the Oldham West by-election on December 3rd did not materialise. The party raised its share of the vote by just three percentage points, whereas Labour's winning candidate added seven points. UKIP's failure in Oldham West was partly the result of poor organisation. Its grass-roots campaigning is shambolic, it does not have enough money and it lacks professionalism, a failing seen in its party political broadcasts in May's general election. In Oldham voters concerned about lost jobs were lectured by UKIP's leader, Nigel Farage, on the evils of the EU and of Jeremy Corbyn, Labour's far-left leader. After the result Mr Farage tried petulantly to blame postal voting, especially among the constituency's ethnic minorities. This grumpy outburst against the system did nothing to help UKIP's image.

Successful populist parties tend to play simultaneously on two different fears: one of cultural erosion and a loss of sovereignty, blamed on mass immigration or the EU; the other of the threat to traditional jobs and ways of life from globalisation (or "getting slaves to make things abroad to sell to unemployed people here", as Ms Le Pen calls it). But UKIP's focus is only on the first, as it is broadly at ease with free markets: Mr Farage even backs privatisation of the National Health Service. That makes it harder to woo Labour voters. Despite coming second in 44 Labour constituencies in May's general election, and despite Mr Corbyn's unpopularity, UKIP is not making deep inroads in the north.

Paradoxically the Brexit referendum also makes UKIP's life harder. Inevitably it raises the question of the party's future after the vote, especially if it yields a substantial majority for staying in the EU. But the referendum is also a challenge because it is revealing two clashing strands within the party. As Stephen Booth of Open Europe, a mildly Eurosceptic think-tank, points out, it is no accident that there are two separate, warring campaigns for Brexit and that they are dividing UKIP.

Leave.eu, which is supported by Mr Farage, stresses the need to curb immigration and take back control over Britain's borders; it offers a vision of a return to a happy, 1950s kind of Britain with a penchant for warm beer. Vote.leave, which is backed by UKIP's sole MP, Douglas Carswell, dwells much less on immigration and stresses instead the prospect of scrapping all the red tape associated with Brussels and of unshackling Britain from the corpse that is today's euro zone. The future held out by this group is not of the 1950s, but of a Singapore on steroids.

UKIP has also been somewhat more restrained than populist parties elsewhere. In America Donald Trump, a would-be Republican presidential candidate, has grabbed headlines by proposing to stop Muslims entering the country. Some UKIP members, says Matthew Goodwin of the University of Kent, are itching to make similar statements. Mr Farage once mused that he too should adopt Trump-like attack-dog politics (though he has condemned Mr Trump's mooted Muslim ban).

Mr Goodwin predicts that UKIP will eventually splinter, with a far-right section breaking away. Over the next 20-30 years Britain will see a lot more ethnic change. Mr Goodwin reckons a worried 10-20% of voters will remain susceptible to the lure of far-right populism. For all its current troubles UKIP, or something that grows out of its ashes, may be here to stay.

The New York Times

The Opinion Pages

Exxon Mobil and the G.O.P.: Fossil Fools

By Timothy Egan

November 5, 2015

1 Well before one hottest-year-ever was followed by yet another record-breaker, before Arctic ice
vanished in real time and Pope Francis made a plea to save our troubled home, the world's largest
private oil company discovered that its chief product could cause global havoc. As an accidental public
service, this deed was little known until recently, when a trove of documents unearthed by several news
5 organizations showed What Exxon Knew and When It Knew It. And it was reported Thursday that the New
York attorney general is starting an investigation to determine whether the company lied about the risks
of climate change.

10 It's not surprising, given its army of first-rate scientists and engineers, that Exxon was aware as far
back as the 1970s that carbon dioxide from oil and gas burning could have dire effects on the earth. Nor is it
surprising that Exxon would later try to cast doubt on what its experts knew to be true, to inject
informational pollution into the river of knowledge about climate change. But what is startling is how a
deliberate campaign of misinformation — now disavowed by even Exxon Mobil itself — has found its way
into the minds of the leading Republican presidential candidates.

15 You can see the origin of this web of duplicity in stories done by the Pulitzer Prize-
winning InsideClimate News and *The Los Angeles Times*. Kudos to both. They found that Exxon's board of
directors was fully briefed by its own scientists, decades ago, on the emerging consensus that burning oil
and gas may cause sea levels to rise, glacial ice to melt and a host of other "generally negative
consequences." Their reaction was to fund the kind of counter-information campaigns that Soviet-era
20 propagandists would be proud of. So, even as one in-house memo stated that "fossil fuels contribute most of
the CO₂" that was turning the earth into an overheated greenhouse, another memo showed that the company
would seek to "emphasize the uncertainty in scientific conclusions."

25 From 1998 to 2005, Exxon proceeded to do just that, contributing almost \$16 million to
organizations designed to muddy the scientific waters. Exxon came clean, in its way, in 2007, when it
publicly acknowledged that the earth's warming was caused, in large part, by CO₂ from the very stuff that
made billions for Exxon. It promised to no longer fund climate change deniers. But now the leading
Republican presidential candidates, with a far bigger megaphone than Exxon ever had, are promoting the
very junk science that was hatched, in part, in Exxon's board room. As a global citizen, Exxon failed
30 miserably, to say the least. A host of organizations, and some politicians have called for Exxon to be
prosecuted for fraud not unlike that which tobacco companies engaged in when they hid the risks of
smoking. Exxon argues that it was a climate change "pioneer" and didn't so much deceive the public as stir
a broader debate.

35 At least it is now on record as stating the obvious: that climate change is real, and human-caused,
and that something — perhaps beneficial to its corporate bottom line — needs to be done. The Republicans
did not get the updated memo. Their two leading candidates for office, Ben Carson and Donald Trump,
deny the consensus of human-caused climate change. They're still reading from quarter-century-old Exxon
talking points. Trump calls climate change "a total hoax." He arrived at this position, judging by several
tweets, after experiencing a couple of especially cold winter days in New York. This is a man who has
bought into every nutty conspiracy theory, and stoked much of the same, about President Obama's birth —
all without a shred of evidence. But he won't take the world's leading scientists at their peer-reviewed
40 word. If this is the kind of judgment you want in the Oval Office, get thee to Trump Tower. And here's
Carson: "I'll tell you what I think about climate change," he said earlier this year. "The temperature is either
going up or down at any point in time, so it really is not a big deal." Ah, well. He also believes the pyramids
of Egypt were built to store grain rather than as tombs for kings and queens. Hey, it's all there in the Bible,
Carson says, for you fact-obsessed archaeologists.

45 How do you explain the boastful ignorance of other leading Republican candidates? It's a political
variant of Upton Sinclair's line about how "It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his
salary depends upon his not understanding it." [...]

The New York Times

Target Steps Out in Front of Bathroom Choice Debate

By Rachel Abrams

April 27, 2016

1 A new policy over bathroom choice has thrust the retailer Target into the center of a nationwide debate over gender identity, civil rights and privacy. Last week, Target announced on its website that it would allow transgender employees and customers to choose the restroom and fitting room that corresponded with their gender identities. About a month earlier, North Carolina passed a law restricting bathroom access to transgender people, a bill that set off a national debate that has even extended to the presidential campaign.

5 The company's announcement — the most prominent position taken by a national retailer — was greeted by cheers from supporters of transgender rights. It has since also made Target the intense focus of conservative activists, lawmakers and consumers, who oppose the company's stance, highlighting the potential risks when a company takes a position on a hotly debated social issue. Some groups have used Target's announcement as a rallying cry, arguing that Target's policy threatens the public's safety. An online petition started by one group, the American Family Association, calling for a boycott of Target stores, has been signed by more than 900,000 people. On Tuesday, the City Council in Oxford, Ala., passed an ordinance forbidding people to use a bathroom that does not match the gender assigned to them at birth. Target has a store in the city. "I will no longer be shopping at your store and neither will any of my family members and friends," one person commented on Target's Facebook page. "You have all lost your minds."

15 Equipped with a growing arsenal of digital tools to organize boycotts, spread poor reviews and otherwise negatively impact sales, consumers are increasingly putting pressure on companies to address their concerns. Policies on gender and sexuality have repeatedly become points of contention, putting some businesses on the front lines of battles over social issues. Last year, for example, a number of companies vocally opposed so-called religious freedom laws intended to give businesses legal cover to deny services to gays and lesbians. Walmart, the nation's largest retailer, was among the most prominent voices, and its influence was widely credited with pushing the governor in its home state of Arkansas to sign an amended version of the state's religious freedom bill. And the head of Chick-fil-A, the restaurant chain, took a position against gay marriage in 2012 only to back off two years later and say that he had not meant to alienate customers.

25 "Generally speaking, as you saw in the gay marriage debate, the big corporations tend to be out in front of Congress and most of the states in implementing anti-discrimination policies," said William Eskridge, a professor at Yale Law School and a co-author of "Sexuality, Gender and the Law." "The policies generally do not cost the corporations anything or very much, and they create some degree of good will," he said.

30 The ordinance in Oxford would make it a misdemeanor for people to use bathrooms that do not correspond to the gender on their birth certificates. Target's liability in such a situation is unclear. A company spokeswoman, Molly Snyder, said Target would comply with all local laws. But she also said, "Our belief in and commitment to inclusivity has not changed." Ms. Snyder said the company's policy had applied to employees for years, though it had not been as widely distributed. She referred to the original announcement, which said that Target "regularly" assesses issues that could affect business, guests and employees, and "given the specific questions" raised by recent legislative proposals, "we felt it was important to state our position."

35 Target may be betting on a more progressive shift in national attitudes on gender and sexuality. Many states have updated their statutes barring employers from discriminating based on sexual identity to include gender identity, too. "Making these progressive value statements is a new form of advertising," said Jonah Berger, an associate professor of marketing at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. There may also be more practical benefits than just netting good will: The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the federal agency that enforces workplace anti-discrimination laws, has made it clear that blocking workers from using bathrooms that correspond to their gender identities violates federal law. "Any employer that has a rule to the contrary is going to find itself in very hot water," said Jillian T. Weiss, a professor of law and society at Ramapo College who has worked on a number of cases involving transgender workplace issues. "Companies have got to be aware that federal law essentially prohibits them from having rules like the one passed in Alabama." Other companies, including Barnes & Noble and Hudson's Bay Company, also have policies explicitly allowing transgender people to use a bathroom that does not correspond to their birth certificate gender. "We're hoping that other corporations will see that there is a price to pay, potentially at least, for pushing this L.G.B.T. agenda too far," said Tim Wildmon, the president of the American Family Association.

40 "We just think this is a bridge too far." [...]

Jeremy Corbyn's groupies are heading for oblivion

Labour has never been so far Left as Mr Corbyn would take it. That he could lead it to victory at an election beggars belief

Simon Heffer, *The Telegraph*, 30 August 2015

[...] In 2015 there is no irresistible ideological force crushing Labour. It opposes a government with a majority of 12 whose leader stretches the definition of "conservative", and who thinks like those Blairites who view events in their party with such despair. Labour lost in May because it could not fathom the motivations, hopes and fears of any but an unrepresentative minority of voters. Its reaction to its defeat has been nearly suicidal. It is as if its inanity has so overwhelmed all but a clutch of blinkered fanatics that the rest struggle to pull themselves together and move on.

Hence the leadership contest in which the blinkered fanatics' candidate, Jeremy Corbyn, has made a cult out of unelectability, railing against "cuts" that most Britons see as essential to the nation's credibility. Yet he seems about to become leader of his party, and of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. Two other candidates, Andy Burnham and Yvette Cooper, invite pity for their post-traumatic stress disorder following their umbilical association with the Miliband debacle. Liz Kendall, who to anyone cerebrate seems the only candidate with a prayer of encouraging floating voters to support Labour, is apparently destined to come last.

I remember talking to Tony Blair about 20 years ago, just after he became Leader of the Opposition, and deducing from what he told me that he was following an interesting historical model in his attempt to re-shape British politics. He was reverting a century, to when his party was still in the womb, and seeking to re-create a political debate between, effectively, a liberal party and a Tory party. He had seen there was room in British politics for only two great forces: and had sensibly worked out that voters who felt overwhelmingly middle-class, and had matching aspirations, would reject the sort of Labour Party in which some of his predecessors felt comfortable. What the public wanted was a party just a shade to the Left of the Tories: and for a time, until Gordon Brown's economic lunacy ended the New Labour project, that was exactly what they got.

Never much more than a puerile student union politician, living in a metropolitan bubble as unlike most of Britain as could be conceived, and the appointee of the trades unions, Ed Miliband chose a different blueprint. Mantras unheard in the Labour movement for a quarter of century were uttered with a new fervour. What was wrong with taxing the rich? What was wrong with borrowing more, even if it upset the international financial markets? What was wrong with a penal property tax? Why not drive wealthy non-doms and their spending power out of Britain?

These things all sound frightfully arresting when bandied about among sycophants at dinner parties in Primrose Hill. The only problem was that the public detested them, and voted accordingly. In England, they also voted against Labour because of the fear of a minority Miliband government being shored up by the SNP, some of whose policies are positively Corbynian. In Scotland, they voted against it because of the fashionable detestation of Westminster, something Mr Corbyn is also capitalising upon in seeking support.

At times in the election campaign Mr Miliband appeared to be addressing the people of East Germany, or some other even more benighted satrapy within the old Soviet bloc. Some Labour MPs – mainly Blairites – knew defeat was coming. For the rest it was traumatic, but as they regain their senses they slowly appreciate the disconnection between the Miliband programme and the straightforward, hard-working, ambitious, increasingly self-reliant people of these islands. However, Labour piles up votes in its shrinking heartlands, in seats it has already won, but falls further and further behind in seats it must win if it is to have a hope of governing, especially with Scotland lost to it.

Yet some still believe that if only Labour had been a bit more Left-wing it would have swept the country: and they are behind Mr Corbyn, as are tens of thousands of other amateur revolutionaries and armchair anarchists who have in order to vote for him joined a party they would normally consider impossibly Right-wing. Subtly different are those, equally deluded, who think Labour "has not lost support because it is too Left-wing", as Dr Ross McKibbin of St John's College, Oxford, wrote in the *London Review of Books* the month after the election, perhaps while the balance of his mind was disturbed. I suppose the millions who used to vote for Mr Blair were all unavoidably detained on election day, or else would have continued to express their enthusiasm volubly. [...]

Abortion law madness: What's really going on Northern Ireland?

Meabh Ritchie, *The Telegraph*, 15 February 2016

In the early hours of last Thursday morning, just minutes past midnight, the majority of Northern Ireland's politicians voted to keep the country's abortion law exactly as it is: one of the most restrictive in Europe. And so the near-total ban on abortion remains in place, even in cases of rape, incest, or even when the foetus won't survive after birth.

The vote was in defiance of a court ruling in November last year which found that banning abortion in these two scenarios was a breach of human rights. It also flies in the face of public opinion: 68 per cent of people recently polled support the legalisation of abortion following sex crime or fatal foetal abnormality. And it follows years of consultations, working groups, hazy government guidelines and condemnations by doctors.

"Even if these few amendments had been passed, the law would still be one of the most restrictive laws on abortion in Europe. The idea that it is radical is just nonsense," said Kellie O'Dowd from Alliance for Choice, which is running a lobbying campaign called Trust Women. "For too long, the debate has been framed in terms of moralising over women having sex. Actually, this is about reproductive health care."

The outcome of the vote was also condemned by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission: "Our elected representatives have neglected the fundamental rights of vulnerable women and girls facing the most difficult circumstances, when they could have resolved the situation."

But at least some people were happy: the news was welcomed by the pro-Life group Precious Life, which promised to "expose" those politicians who voted in favour of the new "evil" legislation. Lovely.

The political and religious divide

The Assembly vote is the latest development to bring this hugely emotive issue to the surface in the political realm. However, the shadows of the Catholic and Protestant churches still loom large. Abortion is one of the few areas where (mainly male) politicians from both sides of the centuries-old political divide are able to reach middle ground, and find it within themselves to unite over preventing women from accessing reproductive healthcare close to home.

Both the nationalist SDLP and the unionist DUP ensured neither amendment to abortion law was passed: 59-40 voted against legalising abortion when there is a fatal foetal abnormality, and 64-30 voted against any law change in the case of rape.

The vote may have kicked the issue into the long-grass - the conclusion was a working group, which will report back in six months (conveniently, after the local elections in May) - but it is by no means the end.

Let's remind ourselves of the current state of play: Northern Ireland is the only part of the UK where the 1967 Abortion Act does not apply. Abortion is only legal to protect the mother's life, or where it can be proved that her mental health is seriously at risk, and is governed under the 1861 Offences against the Person Act. Women and doctors who have or carry out terminations outside of these strict guidelines, face life imprisonment. Even in Sierra Leone, which has been busy dealing with Ebola and the aftermath of a civil war, politicians voted overwhelmingly to repeal this same 19th century law last year, arguing that restrictions on abortion don't prevent it happening, but just push it under the radar.

The same is true in Northern Ireland. An estimated 1,000 women a year take an hour-long flight to England to pay for a private termination, and many more order DIY abortion pills from sites like Women on Web. But under the law, these women can be prosecuted, and two are currently standing trial: one for taking a pill to terminate their pregnancy, and the other for buying the pills for her daughter.

'Women are whores and liars'

In this corner of the UK, just an hour's flight from London, there's widespread opposition by those in power to the introduction of the 1967 Abortion Act. Even a slight broadening to allow two exceptions to the rule, backed by a majority of the public, is proving too much to bear for the government. The ruling that the existing law was in breach of the European Convention on Human Rights, is being appealed by no less than the Attorney General for Northern Ireland and the Justice Minister, and will be heard on June 20 this year.

Moreover, last week's Stormont debate has provided some eye-opening insights into some politicians' attitudes to rape: Jim Allister, leader of the Traditional Unionist Voice (TUV) opposed the rape amendment, calling it a "charter for abortion on demand" and claiming that it's easy for a woman to cry rape: "All you have to do is to allege indecent assault it seems - rape - and you're entitled, on the nod, of a medical practitioner to abortion." [...]

Barack Obama is entitled to tell us what America thinks about Brexit

William Hague, *The Telegraph*, 20 April 2016

[...] This week, President Obama will come to Britain. The main purpose is for the most powerful man in the world to pay tribute to our Queen, the most respected monarch in the world, and that is huge enough. But some, including my dear friend Boris, fear that he will also do something else, and have tried to warn him off advising the British people how to vote in the EU referendum on June 23.

If I were still foreign secretary, I would no doubt be asked by the US Embassy for my view on how the President should approach this delicate matter. And in response I would give them a very clear answer.

First, I would note that British leaders and commentators do not hesitate to hold forth on the foreign policy of the United States: a policy supported by David Cameron, attacked by Jeremy Corbyn, and denounced or questioned by many others with regard to the Middle East, defence spending, drone strikes, the handling of Cuba and scores of other issues. Our Parliament has even held a debate on the deficiencies of Donald Trump.

So it would be a bit rich for us, opining as we do on every aspect of America's relations with other states, to turn all precious and sensitive when American leaders comment on ours.

Secondly, I would advise that the President has the right wherever he is to explain what is in the interests of the United States of America. And since the US is our one indispensable ally, our biggest single trading partner and the ultimate guarantor of our security, its interests matter to everyone in Britain whether we like it or not.

When Obama gives his hint, nudge, direct appeal or whatever he chooses to say on Friday, it will not be on some vague basis that it would be handy if Europe had one phone number. His comments will reflect the analysis of all the foreign policy advisers to this Democrat administration, and indeed to the previous Republican one, that it is, unambiguously, in the interests of the United States that Britain stays in the EU. This is partly because the UK plays a crucial role in ensuring the EU generally supports the objectives of the US and that there is usually transatlantic unity of action.

When America needed strong sanctions to bring Iran to the nuclear negotiating table, Britain helped to make sure the whole EU adopted and implemented those sanctions. And without Britain to push for sanctions on Putin's Russia when Crimea was invaded and annexed, the response of the EU would have been tremulously weak.

Not only is Britain a decisive voice in keeping Europe and America positively aligned, it is also of immense importance in frustrating some of the silliest ideas that emerge in the EU that would pull it away from America.

In 2012, many EU states, led by France, made a determined push to set up an EU military headquarters. For the obvious reason that this would duplicate and potentially undermine NATO and in my capacity as the then foreign secretary, I strongly opposed it. I sat through the 12-hour meeting explaining that no British government would ever agree to it and then I vetoed it. Without the UK, it would have got through, and hands would have been wrung in Washington over the expensive and divisive results.

None of this is to suggest that Britain is a permanent agent of the US, constantly subverting European ideas, although we sometimes come close to being accused of that. It is simply that British and American attitudes are very often in tune, and a Europe without British ministers at its council tables would be less often aligned with our cousins across the Atlantic.

This is true on economic matters as well as military and strategic issues. A Europe without the UK would be a more protectionist one, giving greater weight to Mediterranean instincts that would make it still harder to negotiate the long-awaited and much-needed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership.

A further reason why the President should feel free to speak out is that the last thing America, or the West in general, needs over the next few years is a self-inflicted bout of introversion and instability. The financial disruption of a British exit would be enough on its own to worry Washington, but their biggest concern would be the years of effort diverted by their main allies into a long and very painful attempt to negotiate a new relationship. The message coming back from American embassies across Europe will be sobering: don't expect Britain to strike any easy deal any time soon with the EU if it votes to leave. Anyone who has seen government from the inside knows how much energy would be drained from dealing with all the other economic and security challenges in London, Paris and Berlin.

Whatever we think about Europe, the fact that a vote to leave would be such bad news for our closest allies should be a material factor in deciding how to vote.

I haven't changed my view on the EU: I have often denounced how it works but never advocated withdrawal from it. [...]

Forbes

Only One Loser in Obama's Clean Power Plan

By James Conca

August 4, 2015

1 President Obama announced EPA's new Clean Power Plan at the White House yesterday, citing the need to reduce carbon pollution from power plants as an historic step in taking real action on climate change. Natural gas, renewables, nuclear and efficiency are the winners. Coal is the loser.

5 The President stated that the final Clean Power Plan is fair, flexible and designed to strengthen the fast-growing trend toward cleaner and lower-polluting American energy. "With strong but achievable standards for power plants, and customized goals for states to cut the carbon pollution that is driving climate change, the Clean Power Plan provides national consistency, accountability and a level playing field while reflecting each state's energy mix. It also shows the world that the United States is committed to leading global efforts to address climate change."

10 Last year, even the United States military, an institution not generally known for its liberal thinking, declared that climate change poses a major threat to our national and global security. So this Plan was bound to be developed with climate in mind. Critics claim that the Plan is inherently unfair, punishes taxpayers and will destroy our economy, similar to what was claimed for the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act, and a host of other environmental changes that have kept our country reasonably cleaner and safer than most other nations in the world. Fair to say none of that ever happened. And none of that will happen if this Plan gets enacted. What would happen is the United States would get much cleaner and healthier air, regardless of what you think about climate change.

15 By 2030, emissions of sulfur dioxide from power plants would be 90% lower compared to 2005 levels. Emissions of nitrogen oxides would be 72% lower. And air-borne coal particulates would drop dramatically. Because these pollutants create dangerous soot and smog, getting to such low levels will mean avoiding thousands of premature deaths and thousands fewer asthma attacks and hospitalizations in the future. Since coal kills about a million people worldwide each year, more than any other part of our infrastructure, this public health aspect is the real strength of this Plan, even as climate change is used as the political driver.

20 But this plan will be easier to enact than anyone realizes. Half of our existing coal plants will be pretty old by 2030, it's just a matter of planning their replacement with a combination of gas, renewables and new nuclear. This is exactly what we have been doing over the last ten years, and why our carbon emissions have fallen as much as they have (Time). The EPA rules only formalize the ongoing transition from coal to gas that is occurring anyway. The utilities won't be hurt at all. The consumer won't be hurt either since those states that have been moving forward already, like South Carolina and Kansas, are thriving economically (The Breakthrough Institute; The Energy Collective).

25 The only big loser in the U.S. from these rules will be coal *producers*. Of course, coal use worldwide is growing steadily, so many coal producers are trying to get the coal out of the U.S. and to new customers (Tri-City Herald), very much what the tobacco industry has done as the U.S. market declined and China's smoking market reached a billion people.

30 There are many details, but the important aspects of this Plan is that EPA sets a goal of 32% reduction in power plant emissions by 2030 relative to 2005 levels, but the states will choose how they meet that goal. For example, Washington State can actually ignore this Plan since we are already so low-carbon with hydro, nuclear and wind, that we will beat any national emissions goal on our own by the end of this decade (Washington State). On the other hand, Indiana's emissions are unlikely to decrease much without severe intervention since they are almost completely dependent on coal for their electricity generation. Some of the details, however, can be confusing. To give states a choice, EPA is establishing interim and final statewide goals in three forms:

- a rate-based state goal measured in pounds of CO₂ per megawatt hour of electricity produced (lb/MWh)
- a mass-based state goal measured in total short tons of CO₂ emitted
- a mass-based state goal with a new source complement measured in total short tons of CO₂.

35 Each state will have the flexibility to select the compliance method it prefers. States will also have the ability to shape the way they implement their changes over the period from 2022 to 2029, pretty much giving them free rein. [...]

The Observer view on Google and corporate tax

Observer editorial, Sunday 31 January 2016

[...] as the government has made significant cuts to public spending in the name of austerity, public scrutiny of corporate tax avoidance has rightly increased. How can it be right that the government is eroding support for low-income families while allowing corporate giants to get away with paying virtually no tax?

International tax rules are outdated. They have changed little since the 1920s. And they are easily exploited by global companies that use them to shift profits to tax havens that have very low – or, in some cases, zero – rates of corporate tax. But the government has taken a lax approach to preventing avoidance domestically and has blocked international action to modernise global tax treaties.

Osborne might argue that protecting the parts of the City of London that rely on tax havens is in the interests of the UK economy. But the effect is anti-competitive, undermining British businesses that play by the rules, value their customers and invest in their staff. There is a choice about what type of economy we want. How does propping up businesses that make money from helping others avoid tax fit with the chancellor's march of the makers?

Government failings on corporate tax shed light on three broader issues. First, they are a reminder of the massive resource global companies invest in lobbying international bodies and governments. There are multiple corporate interests with a stake in preserving the status quo: the City of London, global behemoths such as Google that benefit from tax avoidance and the large accountancy firms that trade off an overly complex and archaic tax system.

The government introduced the Lobbying Act to attempt to limit the undue influence of lobbyists. It seems to have had little impact on corporate lobbying power – Google has had 25 meetings with government ministers over the last two years – but it has had a chilling effect on the campaigning work of charities that have a mission to speak truth unto power on the behalf of those without a voice. The revolving door continues to turn: Google has employed countless former and future political advisers and the chair of HMRC is a former top KPMG executive.

Second, the government has failed to modernise the skills and resources of civil servants in the face of this lobbying machine. HMRC could be taking more innovative and aggressive approaches to prevent tax avoidance, following the examples of countries such as France and Spain. It could be cracking down on tax evasion: the Treasury's estimates suggest that every pound spent on this returns £18 to the exchequer. But this would have serious implications for how HMRC is staffed and resourced. The same is true right across parts of government that deal with the corporate sector. Civil servants have a poor record of negotiating procurement contracts and PFI deals with big companies, perhaps not surprisingly when they employ top-paid executives whose key objective was to extract the worst possible deal for government.

Third, the debate about corporate tax avoidance is yet another illustration of how a lack of international co-operation is becoming a growing issue in our increasingly interconnected world. Comprehensively addressing corporate tax avoidance requires reform of international tax rules. Recent wrangles between the European Union and the US on tax show how difficult achieving international consensus can be when competing interests are at stake. But it is possible: the EU is the most successful example ever of international co-operation. It finds itself increasingly under threat in the wake of the euro and migrant crises, showing how difficult it is to hold together a union of countries in less than benign economic circumstances.

But the increasingly populist appeal to national sovereignty that many governments across the continent are now taking, including our own, is not good enough. National sovereignty can only go so far in an age of global tax avoidance, greater mobility of people, climate change and microbial resistance. Where does responsibility for a solution lie? Some argue companies are not entities capable of moral judgment. Yet it is a moral issue when a company such as Google that has in the past adopted the motto "Don't be evil" is doing everything it can to avoid paying tax in the societies in which it employs people and generates profit.

But the primary responsibility lies with government. As long as there is capitalism, there will be companies that seek to make money via a race to the bottom: this is why governments enforce laws and regulations. If they don't work, it is the responsibility of government to fix them. Yet the government's approach has been marked by hypocrisy: it has chastised companies for not paying enough tax, while it has robustly defended the status of tax havens such as Bermuda. [...]

Theresa May's threat to the privacy of reading

John Naughton, *The Observer*, Sunday 8 November 2015

Despite the government's assurances that privacy will be safeguarded, the draft investigatory powers bill is deeply and dangerously intrusive

Reading through the draft investigatory powers bill on Wednesday evening, one name came to mind, that of Frederick Douglass. He was an African American former slave who became one of the most eloquent campaigners for the abolition of slavery and was the living refutation of plantation owners' contention that their "property" lacked the intelligence to function as independent citizens.

Douglass was a remarkable orator and at least as remarkable a writer. His autobiography is one of the glories of the 19th century. In it, he records how, as a slave, he managed to learn to read, partly due to the initial kindness of his owner's wife. But when her husband learned of this, he forbade her to continue. "The first step in her downward course," recalls Douglass, "was in her ceasing to instruct me. She now commenced to practise her husband's precepts. She finally became even more violent in her opposition than her husband himself. She was not satisfied with simply doing as well as he had commanded; she seemed anxious to do better. Nothing seemed to make her more angry than to see me with a newspaper. She seemed to think that here lay the danger."

What had happened, of course, was that his master and mistress had realised that reading and slavery were incompatible with each other. "From this time," he writes, "I was most narrowly watched. If I was in a separate room any considerable length of time, I was sure to be suspected of having a book and was at once called to give an account of myself."

As the US republic evolved, the lesson of Douglass's insight – that there is an indissoluble link between liberty and the freedom to read what one chooses – was baked into its civic culture. It is what made American librarians into such doughty defenders of private reading. "Lack of privacy and confidentiality chills users' choices, thereby suppressing access to ideas," says the website of the American Library Association.

"The possibility of surveillance, whether direct or through access to records of speech, research and exploration, undermines a democratic society," it continues. "Confidentiality of library records is a core value of librarianship. One cannot exercise the right to read if the possible consequences include damage to one's reputation, ostracism from the community or workplace or criminal penalties. For libraries to flourish as centres for uninhibited access to information, librarians must stand behind their users' right to privacy and freedom of inquiry... The right to privacy is the right to open inquiry without having the subject of one's interest examined or scrutinised by others."

These lofty arguments cut no ice with the rulers of the UK's national security state. The draft bill proposes that henceforth everyone's clickstream – the URLs of every website one visits – is to be collected and stored for 12 months and may be inspected by agents of the state under certain arrangements. But collecting the stream will be done without any warrant. To civil libertarians who are upset by this new power, the government's response boils down to this: "Don't worry, because we're just collecting the part of the URL that specifies the web server and that's just 'communications data' (aka metadata); we're not reading the *content* of the pages you visit, except under due authorisation."

This is the purest cant, for two reasons. The first is that, in a world dominated by machine-learning technology, the metadata is what intelligence services really crave because it can easily be mined for patterns and connections. The second reason is that metadata can be incredibly revealing, as the German parliamentarian Malte Spitz discovered when studying six months of his own digital trail in 2011. But Herr Spitz's metadata was just detailing his physical movements. The details of one's clickstream can be equally revealing, as Mikey Smith, the *Daily Mirror*'s online reporter, brilliantly demonstrated by showing that homepage URLs do not require a warrant under the new bill.

Given that the distinction between metadata and content is eroding and the fact that, in a digital world, so much of our reading is done online, what we are looking at is the end of private reading in this country. This particular provision in the bill is highly intrusive and will become more so in the years to come. The political calculation underpinning home secretary Theresa May's draft legislation is that the great British public, which is famously relaxed about surveillance, will wear it. She may well be right.

As Frederick Douglass shrewdly observed over a century ago: "Find out just what any people will quietly submit to and you have the exact measure of the injustice and wrong which will be imposed on them."

Happy birthday Your Majesty - but the end of the monarchy is near

While the British people don't yet equate their instincts and values with the abolition of the monarchy there is a general shift towards republicanism of a very British kind.

Graham Smith, *The New Statesman*, 21 April 2016

Yes, ok – we're all happy when it's someone's birthday. But isn't the Queen's 90th also a stark reminder that this is a party that has to come to an end? The morbid fact is that the monarchy revolves around births, deaths and marriages and so a 90th birthday is also a signal of imminent change, a new king is on the horizon. Sometime in the next ten or fifteen years – perhaps a little longer – Britain will face its first royal succession that anyone alive at the time will be able to remember. And it'll be a succession like no other before it.

When the Queen took over from her father in 1952 we were just a couple of decades into the world of universal suffrage, deference was still strong and was buttressed by a deep sense of patriotism following the end of the war seven years earlier. Women were still treated in the main as a lower order to men, gay rights were unheard of and the age of the computer was only just taking its first tentative steps into the future. How different it will be when Charles succeeds to the throne – a world of social media, 24/7 commentary and instant-reaction public debate. We live in a world that is deeply sceptical of power and established institutions, where the people demand a voice and where any sense of entitlement, any whiff of pomposity is quickly mocked and punctured by the demands for a fairer society.

While the British people don't yet equate their instincts and values with the abolition of the monarchy there is a general shift in public sentiment towards what can be broadly described as small-r republicanism of a very British kind. It is that simple notion that the voter knows best, that we should be asked our opinion, given the chance to kick those in power and demand to know more about what they're up to. It is a sentiment more developed in other countries, but in the UK we are learning to see ourselves as citizens with rights and responsibilities, rather than subjects buffeted by the whims and agendas of those above us. Whether on the left or right people are resisting the dominant ideas of the established political class – and that can only mean trouble in the long run for the monarchy.

A royal succession will be a wakeup call – the first time we witness the inheritance of public office in action. Voices will be raised against it on principle, others will sit up and start to ask impertinent questions that before now they hadn't been roused to ask: why is Charles taking this job without so much as a public debate? What will he do with his new position? What influence is he having? How can he possibly claim to represent this dynamic, modern society?

The questions get harder for the royals to answer. Questions about tax avoidance, abuse of public money and the use of the royal veto to insist on legal privileges and exemptions. The façade of regal probity will give way to expose the grubby self-serving royal household in all its detail. Yet for most it'll be a more straightforward emotional reaction: "we like the Queen, but when she's gone let's get rid of them." That's a common sentiment, expressed just the other day by a radio phone-in caller. He started off saying how much he loved the Queen, how wonderful and hard-working she is. Then the tone changed: "I don't care for the rest of them, when the Queen goes it's time we got rid of the monarchy".

Republicans will grow in number as the debate grows in volume – I have no doubt about that. But in the end the monarchy will fall because the monarch we have grown up with will have left us. What will remain is an unloved family occupying a secretive and unsustainable institution in a world that demands information and power.

Graham Smith is Chief Executive of Republic

When the Queen began her reign, Britain was more welcoming to immigrants

Jodi Burkett, *The New Statesman*, 9 September 2015

When Elizabeth II ascended to the throne on 6 February 1952, Britain was just beginning to pull itself out of profound post-war austerity. The twin events of the Festival of Britain in 1951 and the Queen's coronation in June 1953 marked out a period of renewal when Britain moved into a crucial period of affluence. This affluence was built on the hard work of migrants and refugees.

In the immediate wake of the Second World War Britain took in tens of thousands of migrants and refugees from across Europe and around the Empire – most of these people were actively recruited by a government who knew that without the hard work and dedication of these foreigners Britain would not be able to rebuild quickly or, perhaps, at all.

The late Forties witnessed massive population movements in Europe. Until recently they were the largest Europe had ever seen. Many thousands of people were displaced, homeless, trying to locate loved ones and either return home or build a new life for themselves. Britain welcomed many thousands of these people with open arms.

The reception of these migrants and refugees was not universally positive. But it was overwhelmingly so. While many have chalked up this largely positive attitude to this being a period of full employment, we also need to look at how this attitude fits into a sense of what it was to "be British" at this time.

Not only were these people materially useful but it was seen as Britain's role, or even Britain's responsibility, to help those in need. This fit very well into the carefully crafted British reputation of international humanitarianism and benevolent imperialism that elites, including the Queen, were bound up in perpetuating. In her first Christmas address as Queen in 1952, Elizabeth clearly espoused a vision of the Empire and Commonwealth as having the potential to be of "immeasurable benefit to all humanity".

But what happened to this reputation at the end of empire? This was not a question that was easily or immediately answered. As Dean Acheson, former US Secretary of State, said in 1962, Britain had lost an empire but had not yet found a role in the world.

For the Queen, the answer was that Britain should continue to cultivate this reputation and maintain her international position through the Commonwealth. The Queen's vision for the Commonwealth was much bigger than simply a way to continue Britain's political or economic dominance. Her rhetoric was that of "family" – a family of nations holding similar values and ideals which could be a positive force for change in the world. The pressure that was put to bear on apartheid South Africa in the late Fifties and early Sixties was testament to the way that the Commonwealth could be used to oppose inequality and injustice.

The extent to which the Queen's subjects have supported this vision has not always been clear. From the middle of the century there were voices within politics and the public who wanted Britain to retreat entirely. Those, like Enoch Powell, who advocated that Britain take her ball and go home if the "colonials" didn't want to play by her rules. His were calls for a retreat into insularity in which Britain "took care of her own" and shut everyone else out. And his notion of who was included as one of Britain's "own" – the British "family" – was extremely narrow.

While Powell's vision did, and does, have a lot of supporters, current responses to the refugee crisis in Europe remind us of another vision of Britain and Britain's international position that persists and may have more in common with the Queen's own vision. In the last week it has become clear that a huge number of the British public don't agree with the narrow view of Britain's international and humanitarian role espoused by the likes of Powell, Farage and Cameron.

Hundreds of thousands of pounds and huge quantities of supplies have been raised by "ordinary" Britons to help those in need. The motivation of these people is quite simple – to help others. When pressed, however, many of these people fall back on Britain's past as a humanitarian leader to explain their actions. Clearly this past, and the way this past has been imagined and discussed, still matters.

If you read the tributes to the Queen in the press this week, you would be forgiven for forgetting about the Empire and Commonwealth, or at least seeing them as something firmly in Britain's past. But the legacy of empire lingers on. The hangover of empire sits on the British psyche in a variety of ways. We cannot understand the makeup of the British people without this legacy. We cannot understand Britain's international role without this legacy.

As we reflect on the reign of Elizabeth II we have an opportunity to reflect on Britain's reputation and role in the world and ask – is this what we want a post-imperial Britain to be? If not, what do we do about it?

Zac Goldsmith's failure should sound the death knell for dog-whistle campaigning

Omar Khan, *The New Statesman*, 11 May 2016

If Zac Goldsmith's bid for London mayor was a dog whistle campaign in a city with no dogs, as one wag put it, then the Conservative's failure can also be explained by an over-optimistic belief that the toxicity associated with the Tory brand in the past had been consigned to the historical dustbin.

Perhaps Goldsmith's campaign chiefs were thinking too much about post-general election headlines on how well they did with ethnic minorities in the UK to look more closely at 2015 figures showing that Labour registered double-digit increases in their share of the vote in London's most diverse neighbourhoods.

The politics of division was comprehensively routed by London's multicultural demographics. Sadiq Khan deserves credit for attempting to rise above the slurs of Islamic extremism by association. In doing so he showed faith in the good nature of multicultural London to win out over negativity. But he also understood something about the capital that Sir Lynton Crosby's PR firm evidently didn't.

Political campaigns succeed or fail within the context of their brand, which is informed by the institutional memory of voters. It takes perhaps two generations or more to shake off ingrained attitudes. Conservatives' recent success increasing their share of the ethnic minority vote does not insulate them from the suspicion they could 'revert to type' as the 'nasty party'.

Lord Ashcroft's 2012 study of BME [Black Minority Ethnic] attitudes towards his party showed that the image of Enoch Powell was still fresh, 44 years after his infamous Rivers of Blood speech. The notorious Smethwick campaign came up, 48 years after posters saying 'If You Want a N****r for a neighbour vote Labour'.

David Cameron has led significant efforts to detoxify the brand, welcoming 15 BME Tory MPs and kick-starting policy moves to address racial inequality. The Tories increased their share of the BME vote from 16 per cent in 2010 to over 25 per cent in 2015, still significantly behind Labour but catching up fast. The trends are positive; looking back the Tories were 10 per cent in 2005 and 6 per cent in 2001. Clearly the Conservatives have been moving in the right direction so far.

Yet the question remains whether this increased BME support is permanent or temporary and subject to the party continuing to prove they are not racist. We await more detailed ward-level data from London Elects but it is possible to draw some conclusions from the assembly results. The figures suggest that Goldsmith may have abruptly reversed the positive trends, perhaps even losing an election he could have won. If so, the most likely explanation would be because the negative campaign against Khan rebooted old memories of the Tories toxic brand on race.

There is a question of whether sensitivity to negative political campaigns on race is spreading from the BME population to the White population as social media and more nuanced news coverage help explain why offence is being caused. As our multicultural society grows up it is inevitable that understanding about race will continue to expand, and that means negative campaigns win ever less support from White voters. In other words, the proportion of dogs responding to the whistle is set to shrink faster than the rising BME population.

How much damage has Goldsmith's campaign inflicted, not just in London but nationally, what impact could this have on the next general election?

On first preference mayoral ballot – perhaps the best indicator of real support – Goldsmith lost a quarter of the Tory vote (35 per cent to Boris Johnson's 44 per cent in 2012) while Labour increased their share (40 to 44). City Hall and the current voting system hasn't been in existence long enough to draw conclusive trends or to work out the 'real' level of party support excluding particular factors, like Boris's personal popularity.

However, if Goldsmith had taken 60 per cent of the white vote in London and one-third of the BME vote – in line with the 2015 general election result – he would have actually beaten Khan, albeit by the narrowest of margins, instead of losing by over 300,000 votes. In other words, the difference between Mayor Goldsmith and Loser Goldsmith was his own campaign.

Theoretical assumptions rarely give us a complete picture of how it might have played out in reality, but the lessons for the Tories are stark. As ethnic minorities continue to set up home in marginal seats and the BME population edges towards 20 per cent by 2020 according to projections, the Tory leader probably needs to increase their share of the BME vote even higher than in 2015 to win another term in office. Going backwards is not an option.

The Conservatives certainly cannot afford a resurrection of their old nasty party image. Goldsmith's campaign will have refreshed memories of the past, and Tory strategists will have to work doubly hard to assess and repair the damage. [...]

The Atlantic
A Strikingly Different State of the Union Address

By David A. Graham

January 12, 2016

1 President Obama and his aides promised that this year's State of the Union address would be different, and he delivered on that promise. It was a somewhat unusual speech: Surprisingly devoted to rebutting Republican candidates for president, unusually loose and humorous, and elsewhere strikingly cerebral, passing up the tear-jerking climaxes of past addresses for a wonky and cerebral—though no less heartfelt—plea for civics and a better politics.

5 The goal of the speech, aides said in previews, would be for Obama to begin to frame his own legacy for the historians. He would eschew the standard litany of policy ideas in favor of a broader look at the future. That's what he did. Early on, the president articulated the progressive view of the world. "America has been through big changes before—wars and depression, the influx of immigrants, workers fighting for a fair deal, and movements to expand civil rights," he said. "Each time, there have been those who told us to fear the future; who claimed we could slam the brakes on change, promising to restore past glory if we just got some group or idea that was threatening America under control. And each time, we overcame those fears." But he added, "Such progress is not inevitable. It is the result of choices we make together." That's a clear-eyed view of history for a leader who has often fallen into the trap of portraying history as an inexorable march toward human perfection.

15 Even in these early moments, the implicit rebuke to the Republican Party's presidential candidates was already present—"fear" having been a signal theme in the race so far, and in particular in the last GOP debate. His comments seemed at first like a possible coincidence; then, as the speech continued, there was line after line that carefully targeted to respond to specific comments from Republican candidates, evidence of how closely Obama is tracking the race to succeed him. "Anyone claiming that America's economy is in decline is peddling fiction," he fired at Trump. He rejected "over-the-top claims that this is World War III," contra Chris Christie. "Our answer needs to be more than tough talk or calls to carpet bomb civilians," he snipped at Ted Cruz.

25 Yet Obama made conciliatory gestures toward the Republicans in the Congress, twice praising new Speaker of the House Paul Ryan and urging bipartisan work on criminal-justice reform. Policy proposals were indeed in short supply. Some of the few specifics to pop up were ideas that have been floating around for several years—such as free, two-year community-college degrees—or since the start of his presidency, as in the case of closing the prison at Guantanamo Bay. Several other signature topics were missing. Save a brief mention at the start, guns and gun control were notably absent from the speech, even as Obama rolls out new executive actions to further regulate firearm sales. Although debate about race relations and police reform has dominated the headlines since Obama last stepped to the rostrum in the House a year ago, he barely touched on either, except to rebuke Trump and to criticize restrictions on voting. There were few references to domestic terrorism, and none at all to abortion. Obama spoke at some length about ISIS and global terrorism, however, as well as Middle East policy. In keeping with his recent remarks, he framed the comments as a plea for calm. "The United States of America is the most powerful nation on Earth. Period. It's not even close," he said, then tacked on a line that he perhaps intended as a joke but which garnered applause, especially from Republicans: "We spend more on our military than the next eight nations combined." As for what he intended to do with that military, Obama sought to strike a balance. On the one hand, he promised to chase terrorists down and kill them. (His "we have to take 'em out" was a jarring echo of his predecessor.) He called on Congress to authorize military action against ISIS. But he also warned, "We also can't try to take over and rebuild every country that falls into crisis. That's not leadership; that's a recipe for quagmire, spilling American blood and treasure that ultimately weakens us. It's the lesson of Vietnam, of Iraq—and we should have learned it by now."

45 The most extensive section of the speech, however, concerned climate change, in which the president hailed the Paris climate talks and demanded action on emissions—not only to save the planet, but also as a way for American businesses to prosper. And he came with a sharp jab at doubters. "Look, if anybody still wants to dispute the science around climate change, have at it," Obama chuckled. "You'll be pretty lonely, because you'll be debating our military, most of America's business leaders, the majority of the American people, almost the entire scientific community, and 200 nations around the world who agree it's a problem and intend to solve it." [...]

The Wall Street Journal

Bernie Sanders Faces a Daunting Task: Win Black Votes

By Peter Nicholas

April 20, 2016

1 Coming off a lopsided loss in New York, Sen. Bernie Sanders's campaign team pointed to an enduring problem that could sink his struggling presidential bid if it isn't fixed: his failure to win over more African-American voters. Black voters in New York on Tuesday were nearly a quarter of the Democratic electorate and favored Hillary Clinton by a 50-point margin, exit polls showed, locking in
5 a victory that gives her a nearly insurmountable lead in delegates. "I am hopeful going forward we will do better," said Tad Devine, a senior campaign adviser to Mr. Sanders. "And we know we must. We're not going to win New Jersey unless we improve our numbers with African-American voters."

 Meanwhile, some Democrats worry the increasingly harsh tone of the campaign could make it tougher to unify the party for the general election, but it isn't clear the feuding will end anytime soon.

10 During the course of his campaign, Mr. Sanders has tried to make inroads with African-Americans, showcasing endorsements from black celebrities, intellectuals and civil-rights activists. But the outreach isn't paying dividends at the polls. If the trend persists, Mr. Sanders could see his hopes of a comeback extinguished. Aside from California and Pennsylvania, the two states that offer the most delegates through the rest of the calendar are Maryland and New Jersey. In the 2008 Democratic
15 primary, blacks accounted for 23% of Democratic voters in New Jersey, 37% in Maryland.

 The Sanders campaign is trying again to reach out to black voters. On Wednesday, it released two new TV ads that will air in Maryland targeting black voters. One spot features African-American actor Danny Glover vouching for Mr. Sanders's commitment to civil rights. "I think Bernie is with us," Mr. Glover says.

20 The day after the New York primary was fairly quiet. Mr. Sanders went home to Burlington, Vt. Mrs. Clinton held a forum about gun violence in Philadelphia that featured former Attorney General Eric Holder and several African-American women who have lost children in shootings or police custody. Mrs. Clinton's 16-point win in New York left both campaigns with a new set of strategic decisions to make. In the run-up to the New York primary, Mr. Sanders said repeatedly that
25 he would win the state. Inside the campaign, aides anticipated a loss in New York, though they believed the margin would be closer, Mr. Devine said. With Mrs. Clinton netting 33 more delegates in New York—and five states, including Maryland, voting next Tuesday—the Sanders campaign must rethink the path needed to close the gap with Mrs. Clinton, he said.

30 The hurdle is daunting. David Wasserman of the nonpartisan Cook Political Report estimated that Mr. Sanders needs to capture 59% of the remaining pledged delegates to erase Mrs. Clinton's lead. "We're going to have to win, and we're going to have to win big," Mr. Devine said. "New York was a setback in terms of the scope of her victory. ... We're trying to figure out a realistic way to win this."

35 For her part, Mrs. Clinton must decide when to shift focus from Mr. Sanders to her likely showdown with the Republican nominee in the fall. People familiar with her campaign's thinking on that question said not to expect Mrs. Clinton to move into a general-election posture before the five contests next Tuesday. Another question for both campaigns is what to do about a tone that has become caustic. Robert Reich, a Sanders supporter who served as labor secretary under former President Bill Clinton, posted a message on Facebook calling on both campaigns to knock it off. "We
40 will need to join together to ensure one of them becomes president," he wrote. "It's important we not jeopardize that future joint effort through excessive divisiveness now." A similar dynamic played out in 2008, when Mrs. Clinton lost the nomination to then-Sen. Barack Obama. Sending a message to her disappointed supporters, Mrs. Clinton quit the race and then campaigned with her rival in a New Hampshire town called Unity. Mr. Obama hired members of her defunct campaign team in a step
45 toward reconciliation.

 Mr. Sanders says he is determined to fight until the final contest in Washington, D.C., on June 14. [...]

Blair's baffled by the left because he doesn't see the bigger picture

Michael White, *The Guardian*, 24 February 2016

So Tony Blair is puzzled about the rise of Jeremy Sanders and Bernie Corbyn as fiery leftwing candidates for high office. Excellent. The former centre-left prime minister isn't puzzled enough, in my experience. Puzzlement might do him good; even prompt him to wonder if his own behaviour since leaving office has contributed in any way to voter disenchantment. I say this more in hope than expectation, more in sorrow than in anger, as an admirer of Blair. A skilled and successful leader of a Britain more prosperous and content than now for a decade, he would not have got us into several of the troubles the country currently faces – in Europe and Scotland for example, though he managed one or two of his own.

But I never felt he stood back far enough to see the bigger picture. On a trip once I gave him a history book in the shaky belief that, if he ever bothered to open it, he might learn something. Fat chance. I can't remember how often I've joked that Gordon Brown read books but Blair used them to keep the door open.

In his interview with the Guardian and FT he seems to acknowledge that many Labour and Democrat activists have faced frustrating economic times, job losses, stagnant pay, rising debt and faltering services. They are burdened with student debt, the jobs market looks spottier than it was when their parents were young and the chances of owning their own home currently look remote in many places.

Worse in some ways, they have grown up in some comfort and with high expectations, both comfort and expectations higher than in previous generations which may have got lucky but generally started from a much lower base: no foreign holidays, CDs or convenience food, less stuff and far less choice.

To cap all that, they see a class of super-rich racing ahead with all the swag in ways not seen for a century at least. As Jonathan Freedland points out, Sanders tells this story with eloquent gusto (not a Corbyn strong suit) and gets a huge gut response from audiences.

Instead of making himself part of the solution, Blair is now 62 and part of the problem.

Warren Buffett, the self-made, super-rich investment sage of Omaha, Nebraska, says it too in sorrow. "There is a class war. It is being waged by my class, the rich, and we are winning." Buffett ("I gave my children enough money to do anything, but not enough to do nothing") is giving most of his fortune to Bill and Melinda Gates's foundation to spend on real need.

That's an answer of sorts but not a good enough one. There has to be a political and economic answer to the great challenge of rising inequality around the world, in China and New Zealand almost as much as in the US or UK.

This is where Blair's puzzlement kicks in. He doesn't really get it. He thinks about Corbyn and Sanders in terms of their electability. He's right but he's also wrong. I agree that Middle America is unlikely to elect either of the two angry, old, white men currently on offer as president, the austere but principled Sanders or the charlatan Donald Trump. Ditto the bearded, inner-city leftwinger from Islington.

Vermont, where Sanders hails from (I met him there when he was mayor of Burlington in the 80s), is as typical of the US as Islington is of Britain. Most people here and there live neither in high-density inner cities or in low-density rusticity. Most voters live in smaller towns or the suburbs.

But activists who have put up with the compromises of Blairism and of his pals Bill and Hillary Clinton feel disappointed, cheated even. I resist YouGov analyst Freddie Sayers's insistence that the poor are now behind Bernie, as distinct from the public-sector middle class and idealistic young.

But they are cross enough not to mind if their candidate doesn't win. Those young enough not to have seen this movie before even think he might; they have not witnessed Michael Foot or Neil Kinnock falter, not seen George McGovern or Gene McCarthy lose the White House. They're like Peter Finch, the disillusioned TV anchor in *Network*, who tells his viewers to open the window and shout: "I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it any more."

Network is 40 years old and a lot of people are a lot madder now. They want to frighten the elites who have failed them and are yet to come up with viable solutions. So they vote for candidates who haven't done so either but at least articulate their frustrations from the streets of Athens or Paris to sleepy Burlington, Vermont [...].

Regression dressed up as "reform": how rhetoric helped dismantle the welfare state

Jeremy Seabrook, *The Guardian*, 22 March 2016

The idea of "reform" has a long, honourable tradition in Britain: individuals and social movements committed to extending the franchise throughout the 19th century, campaigns to mitigate the cruelties of early industrialism: the abridgement of hours of labour, protection for women and children, improved sanitation and housing. Later reformers and radicals introduced a system of "welfare" to defend people, not only against the vagaries of the economic cycle, but also against the known vicissitudes of life – sickness, ageing and bereavement.

The word "reform" was revived with great fanfare by the coalition government in 2010; but this no longer referred to the damage inflicted by an economic and social system. It now claimed to deal with the baleful effects of the welfare state, paradoxically, the result of earlier "reforms" the government is eager to dismantle. Such a project was possible, because while only the ghost of industrial manufacture remained in Britain, the structures of welfare, designed to humanise it, were still in place. It is this tottering relic which, like the factories long fallen into rubble and splintered glass, is now ripe for development by the realtors of modernity.

The rhetoric of government is a mocking echo of the passion of those who fought chronic want and insecurity in the first industrial era. People are now to be "set free", "liberated", "released", not from slum conditions and rapacious employers, but from a grim dependency on welfare, a fatalistic acceptance of "benefits" due to long-term – even inter-generational – unemployment, what was called, in a less squeamish time, "hereditary pauperism".

Young people are to be saved from "sitting at home and falling into depression and despair", emancipated from a "culture" of mendicancy upon the public purse, and led into the perpetual sunshine of free markets.

In this enterprise, David Cameron, George Osborne and Iain Duncan Smith presented themselves as liberators of the people. The "evils" they addressed are the belief that "it pays not to work", the "something for nothing culture" conviction that "the world owes us a living", and the "culture of entitlement" created by the welfare state.

Their changes to the benefit system would help people "escape the poverty trap and get on in life". The proud, self-reliant British are to be released from the bondage of benefits. The heroic tone of the government's proposals suggests a usurpation of the epic project which Labour once conceived of redressing the imbalance of power between capital and labour; but the new objective is freedom from oppressive welfare dependency, an evil confronted by today's fearless warriors for liberty.

George Osborne reiterated the theme in his Budget speech of July 2015. He spoke of "transforming the lives of those trapped in welfare"; he made it sound, insultingly, like the situation of miners caught by a rockfall in some industrial catastrophe, while he, no doubt in a conspicuous hi-vis vest, leads the rescue party.

The next sequence in this enfranchisement of the people is a concession that, however benign the intent of earlier legislation to free them from fear and want, it has led to a situation "which cannot be cured by money", or "state hand-outs" as they are now known. This is audacious, coming as it does from those whose ownership, indeed worship, of wealth is remarkable. Their vocabulary of "wealth creationism" has distinctly religious undertones; and for them, the "generation" of wealth is the aetiological myth of capitalism; a profane Book of Genesis.

Cameron elaborated it in June 2012. He said 'The truth is we can't throw money at the problems and paper over the cracks. You can give a drug addict more money in benefits, but that is unlikely to help them out of poverty, indeed it could perpetuate their addiction. You can pump more cash into chaotic homes, but if the parents are still neglectful, the kids are still playing truant, they're going to stay poor in the most important senses of the word. So this government is challenging the old narrow view that the key to beating poverty is simply more redistribution.' No clearer enunciation is possible of the doctrine that the relief of poverty lies in withdrawal of State bounty from those who have no need of "safety nets" (a persistent image that – perhaps correctly – attributes advanced circus skills to the poor).

The credo could not be more explicit: while the rich must be encouraged in their mystical quest to create wealth by heaping more treasures upon them, the poor must be set free by the withdrawal of the meagre resources at their command. Thus, claimed Cameron, the causes of poverty will be treated at source – "debt, family breakdown, educational failure, addiction".

It cannot be said that the government does not spin a good yarn: consummate storytellers, they extol the heroics of capitalism and the threat to it from its ill-wishers and enemies, whether in the form of organised labour or "do-gooders"; a pejorative term that suggests that the hour of the doers of evil has once more sounded.

If the government really believes the symptoms it identifies are "causes" of poverty, this shows the shallowness of its understanding of society, the very existence of which, in any case, Margaret Thatcher had long ago thrown into doubt. [...]

The Guardian view on the national living wage: not the end but the beginning

Editorial, *The Guardian*, 29 March 2016

George Osborne's national living wage comes into force this week. It is small step in the right direction but does not herald a high-wage economy

Summer 2020: straight after a general election that has delivered his party an upset slim majority, new chancellor John McDonnell delivers a huge rise in the minimum wage over each of the next five years so that the lowest-paid workers from Tyneside to the Wirral are much better off.

You can imagine the likely reaction. Conservatives decry the Marxist opposite. Economists tut about the innumerate driving a coach and horses through the established independent process for setting the minimum wage. The business lobby go puce with anger about what this will do to company bottom lines. The rightwing press runs story after story about the care homes and local councils going bust thanks to the dangerous socialist in Number 11.

Well, imagine no longer – it's already happened. Except the chancellor in question was not some Labour hopeful, but that tonsured apostle of neoliberalism, George Osborne, in his emergency budget straight after last year's surprise election victory. And it all starts this Friday, when workers over 25 years of age on the minimum wage see a rise in their pay packets of 50p per hour. It continues going up over the next four years, from £7.20 to at least £9 an hour. By 2020, nearly one in four employees are likely to have received some boost to their wages thanks to that one move by Mr Osborne. This was the same budget in which the Conservatives heaped further obligations on firms to fund training, and went after both non-doms and buy-to-let landlords.

Of course, it's not quite as straightforward as that, but consider: a member of the same party that bitterly opposed the very introduction in 1998 of the minimum wage and warned it would destroy up to 2 million jobs is now responsible for its fastest-ever rise. That makes this phase of the minimum wage not just a fascinating economic experiment, but a political one, too. Mr Nixon, China awaits.

Even this isn't enough for Mr Osborne, who is the sort who cannot hear the epithet "too clever by half" without appealing for an upgrade. The chancellor calls his new wage rate the National Living Wage. It is no such thing. The Living Wage is set according to how much a household needs to make ends meet, and is far higher than even the Osborne-boosted rate: £9.40 an hour in London, £8.25 outside. Nor is it the old minimum wage, set according to "what the market will bear". Instead, the chancellor wants his new pay rate to rise over time to 60% of the median salary. While doing so, he will hack £12bn from social security – hitting the working poor hardest. Forming in front of our eyes is a Conservative version of the future of low-paid workers: receiving much less in benefits and monitored even more closely by government but getting paid more.

Yet the huge problem of low pay in the UK requires much more than a slightly more generous rate mandated by Whitehall – and that is where Mr Osborne's policy falls so far short as to bring into doubt his sincerity in tackling it. First, the people who will gain most from this are not lone parents or young singles. Instead, many of those on minimum wage are second earners in a well-off household (one a well-paid lawyer, say, the other a teaching assistant). Combine that fact with the staggeringly regressive impact of Mr Osborne's other tax and benefit changes and you end up with the unfairness pointed out by the independent Resolution Foundation in which, even after this Friday's payrise, a low-earning couple with three children could be £3,000 a year worse off.

Second, low pay reflects both power imbalances in the workforce and inequality between the high-paid south-east and the rest of the country – neither of which this government is doing anything meaningful about. For decades, trade unions in Germany rejected the very idea of a minimum wage – why did they need one when they sat on company boards and negotiated good pay rises for their members? It is only with the growth of a low-paid workforce even there that Europe's biggest economy last year brought in a minimum wage.

Workers on poverty pay in the UK not only have to worry about how to afford to eat and heat and rent their homes, but also whether they will get enough hours tomorrow, or next week. Meanwhile, ministers refuse to recognise abuse of zero-hours contracts as a serious problem. The new minimum wage is a small step in the right direction – but does it take Britain towards being a high-wage, high-productivity economy? Mr Osborne doesn't appear to have that even as a goal.

Salon

Good riddance, Bush Dynasty! Why Jeb's disastrous campaign is a fitting end to a poisonous history

By Gary Legum

February 22, 2016

1 If there is any justice in the universe (I know, but let's go with it), Jeb Bush's announcement
Saturday night that he was ending his campaign for the Republican nomination marks the permanent
end of the Bush family's presence in our national politics. Can anyone think of another family dynasty
that has had such a huge role in a particular stretch of American history, yet has almost zero hold on
5 the country's imagination?

The Roosevelt cousins Teddy and Franklin served altogether about five full presidential terms
and had an outsized role in building and shaping the nation in the first half of the twentieth century;
they are among the most notable personalities in our political history. The martyrdom of Jack and
Robert Kennedy, and the tragedies that befell other members of their family, might have ensured them
10 a place in our national mythos out of proportion to their actual impact, a fact that drives the right
crazy. (There is a reason conservatives to this day still make snarling references to Chappaquiddick.)
Still, there is an argument to be made that the Great Society legislation later signed by Lyndon
Johnson had its roots in JFK's administration (along with the long and brutal Vietnam War). And
Teddy Kennedy was a consequential senator for over fifty years. His decades-long push for healthcare
15 reform helped shove Obamacare over the finish line in his memory.

But the Bushes are in a class by themselves. Of the last nine presidential elections, a Bush has
been on the Republican ticket for six of them, winning five. They have had a profound impact on the
nation we see around us today, from George Herbert Walker Bush's role in the Reagan administration
and his waging of the Persian Gulf War in 1991, to George W. Bush's eight years of incompetent,
20 bumbling rule that left the nation with a stunning budget deficit, a financial crisis the likes of which
we had not seen since the 1930s, thousands of broken military veterans, and foreign entanglements
that we may never be able to untangle. The Bushes are like the McDonald's of political families. They
have popped up everywhere for half a century, and damn near everything they offer is unhealthy
enough to kill you.

25 But when you think of them, do you think of the glamor of Camelot, or stoic leadership in the
face of great national tragedies like the Great Depression or World War II, or an outsized personality
promising basic fairness to citizens, fighting for progressive reforms, and not letting something small
like getting shot stopping you from giving a speech before seeking medical attention? Do you think of
either 41 or 43 as legends? What are the tales we'll be writing about them in our nation's history
30 books? A couple of wars, a hideous recession, and the infliction of Dick Cheney on the nation, an
act for which W should never be allowed out in public again. These are not accomplishments that get
your face carved on Mount Rushmore.

If it is the end for the Bushes, could there be a more fitting close than a member of the family
blowing a boatload of money and good will on a hopeless campaign, the very nature of which
35 befuddled him, and for which he seemed to be caught flatfooted, completely unprepared for the forces
arrayed against the juggernaut he was so sure would roll over the opposition? Because that was Jeb
Bush for the last few months of his political career. Granted, almost no one saw Donald Trump
coming. But a year ago, Bush's nomination was supposed to be a sure thing. He was going to roll up
huge amounts of fundraising. The RNC scheduled the primaries in such a way as to allegedly be
40 advantageous to him. His name was supposed to be a plus for some reason. The Republican
establishment, at least, seemed to think the Barack Obama that exists in the right-wing media bubble
would fuel a nostalgia for the W years that would redound to Jeb's benefit. God knows why, but no
one ever accused Reince Priebus of being the crispiest French fry in the Happy Meal. [...]

The Daily Beast

Hillary Clinton's Next Challenge: Bury Trump and Stay Out of the Gutter

By Michael Tomasky

June 8, 2016

1 So the last Sanders argument, like umpteen others, has come around to bite him.

5 He's spent the last two weeks talking about the "momentum" he was going to have after winning California, but as the primaries draw to a close, the momentum is on Hillary Clinton's side. She exceeded expectations in California, with her victory called early Wednesday (what was up with those polls that had Bernie Sanders beating her among Latinos? They always smelled fishy to me). She demolished him in New Jersey, won New Mexico, and even pulled off a stunning (if small-potatoes) win in South Dakota, which came out of nowhere. Speaking of nowhere, there's nowhere for Bernie to go now. He ran an impressive race in many ways, and annoying in others, but he lasted a lot longer than almost anyone thought he would. But today the story isn't him. It's the nominee.

10 It's a huge historical marker, as Clinton noted in her speech. "Thanks to you, we've reached a milestone, the first time in our nation's history that a woman will be a major party's nominee," Clinton said. "Tonight's victory is not about one person—it belongs to generations of women and men who struggled and sacrificed and made this moment possible." It's also a huge personal moment for Clinton. For all the arrows, justified and not, she's absorbed for the last quarter-century, she's made it. She's made history in a huge way. If you read biographies of her, you've read about the people who thought back when she was at Wellesley that maybe she had it in her to be America's first woman president. It's an expectation that has hovered over her for many years, and she's now in a position to achieve it.

15 The Democratic Party has now nominated in succession the country's first African American and its first woman. This is a great sign of progress, but more tellingly it's a sign of what the two major parties have become over the course of the past 20 years. The Democrats are the party of multicultural America, while the Republicans have become in essence a white ethno-nationalist party. Yes, it has some nonwhites, but it's a party whose *raison d'être* is increasingly to save white America from the new hordes, a point made clearly by its collective decision to reject two Latino nominees and instead elevate the first openly racist major-party candidate since maybe Woodrow Wilson.

20 So now it's (almost) officially Clinton vs. Trump, the question is, what will it look like? Big-time ugly. Trump, in his speech, said he's giving a speech next Monday about the Clintons and corruption, signaling what his campaign is basically going to be about. And Clinton already showed us last week in that San Diego speech on Trump and foreign policy, and reminded us again in splashes Tuesday night, that her main argument is going to be that temperamentally and otherwise, Trump just doesn't belong in the Oval Office. Every election, people like me say, "This is going to be the nastiest presidential election ever," and, every time, it turns out to be true—each one has been a little nastier than the last. But this one is going to be hyper-space nasty.

25 The key challenge for Clinton is going to be one of tone and balance—she'll need to find a way to trade punches with Trump without letting him get in her head and without reducing herself to his drooling level. This is what the other Republicans could never get right. Jeb Bush and Ted Cruz let Trump get inside their heads, toy with them the way Ali used to toy with the bums of the month he was fighting in 1963. Marco Rubio made the mistake of lowering himself to Trump's level, trading insults. As I tweeted at the time, the two of them came off like Don Rickles and Joan Rivers. Rubio was good at it, but it wasn't what people wanted out of him, and it certainly isn't what voters want out of Clinton. She found the sweet spot in that San Diego speech. She shredded his dignity but managed to maintain, and even augment, her own. Trump is going to be continually trying to take her down into the gutter from which he operates. She needs to stay out of it while staying on the attack. That won't be an easy thing to do.

30 And in the near-term, she has an intra-party issue to attend to: How will she woo the Sanders voters? It's mostly on Bernie, especially the way the air went out of the balloon Tuesday, to do the right thing. Maybe the fact that he requested a meeting with President Obama is a sign that he's ready to. But it's incumbent upon Clinton to handle this right, too, not for Sanders's personal sake, but for the sake of his voters. She needs those voters in November, and they probably represent the future direction of the Democratic Party. [...]

Politico

How Trump Exposed the Tea Party

By Michael Lind

September 03, 2015

1 Here are some of the things that have been said by the guy who has galvanized the GOP's Tea
Party base and taken the lead in the Republican presidential race: "Every Republican wants to do a big
number on Social Security, they want to do it on Medicare, they want to do it on Medicaid. And we can't
do that." "As far as single payer [health care], it works in Canada, it works incredibly well in Scotland. ...
5 You can't let the people in this country, the people without the money and resources, to go without
healthcare." "People as they make more and more money can pay a higher percentage" of taxes.

Only one of two conclusions can be drawn here. Either the Tea Party base—which the media would
have us think mainly consists of angry libertarians inveighing against taxes and runaway big government—
hasn't really been listening to Donald Trump, who made all the above statements, or, alternatively, most of
10 the media have read the Tea Party and its true aims and ambitions entirely wrong. I suggest the latter is the
correct answer. The success of Trump's campaign has, if nothing else, exposed the Tea Party for what it
really is; Trump's popularity is, in effect, final proof of what some of us have been arguing for years: that
the Tea Party is less a libertarian movement than a right-wing version of populism. Think William
15 Jennings Bryan or Huey Long, not Ayn Rand. Tea Partiers are less upset about the size of government
overall than they are that so much of it is going to other people, especially immigrants and nonwhites.
They are for government for them and against government for Not-Them.

This is what explains a lot of what's going on now. After all, according to the commentariat, the
Summer of Trump was supposed to have been the Summer of Rand Paul. It seems like only yesterday that
the media were interpreting the rise of the Tea Party as a triumph of anti-statism and predicting that Paul,
20 with his libertarian views on national security and data privacy, represented the future of the American
right.

But Paul has all but disappeared from view, polling in the low single digits, while Trump has
soared into the lead, and nothing he says, no matter how outrageous, seems to sour the right-wing base on
him. Trump is no libertarian; quite the opposite. He is a classic populist of the right who peddles suspicion
25 of foreigners—it's no accident that he was the country's leading "birther" raising questions about Barack
Obama's citizenship—combined with a kind of "producerism." In populist ideology, society is divided not
among rich and poor but among producers and parasites.

Populists are suspicious of unearned wealth, including the interest charged by bankers who
manipulate "other people's money" (to use the phrase of Louis Brandeis). And populists the world over are
30 hostile to the idle or undeserving poor who allegedly live on welfare at the expense of productive workers
and capitalists. Populists tend to attribute the existence of large numbers of the idle rich and the idle poor
to government corruption. In the words of the 1892 People's Party platform: "From the same prolific
womb of governmental injustice we breed the two great classes—tramps and millionaires."

To anyone paying attention, it should have been clear from the 2010 elections onward that Tea
35 Party voters were at odds with the libertarians in the Republican donor class and Beltway think tanks.
Further confirmation came when David Brat, an obscure college professor, defeated Republican House
Majority Leader Eric Cantor in a 2014 Republican primary in a shocking upset. Cantor was punished for
supporting more legal immigration and amnesty for illegal immigrants, something favored by Republican
elites but opposed by conservative voters. Of immigration, Brat told Fox News: "It's the most symbolic
40 issue that captures the differences between me and Eric Cantor."

The hostility of the Republican right to illegal immigration is usually attributed by establishment
pundits to pure racism, no doubt correctly in many cases. After all, according to traditional free-market
libertarianism, open borders are good ("There shall be open borders," was the mantra of the late Robert
Bartley of the *Wall Street Journal*, summarizing the credo of the free-market right). But in the moral
45 universe of populists, illegal immigrants of any race are classic "parasites" preying on hard-working
producers. [...]

The Boston Globe

Prospects uncertain for GOP unity under Ryan

By Matt Viser

October 23, 2015

1 Representative Paul Ryan took several major steps Thursday to fill a leadership void in a fractured
Republican Party starved for a national figure to articulate a vision and unify its warring factions. The
unassuming Wisconsin congressman — known not only for his tax policies, but for his duck hunting,
intense workouts, and strolling the Capitol with headphones blaring music by Rage Against the Machine —
5 wrapped up the support of key GOP House groups and is poised to become the next speaker after votes next
week. “I am ready and eager to be our speaker,” Ryan wrote in a letter sent to House Republicans on
Thursday evening, making his bid official. “This is just the beginning of our work. There is a long road
ahead. So let’s get started.”

10 But as he returns to center stage, Ryan may face an even more difficult task than he did as the vice
presidential nominee in Mitt Romney’s failed 2012 bid to seize the White House from President Obama.
While he has secured united support to win the gavel, it remains unclear whether he will have any more
success than the current House speaker, John A. Boehner, in corralling disruptive representatives who want
to use the threat of a national credit default and government shutdowns as leverage in their quest of
conservative goals.

15 Most House Republicans said Thursday that they hoped they could move forward and unite in a
way they have not been in years. “Whether you like it or not, we went through a little bit of a cleansing
exercise around here,” said Representative Bill Flores, a Texas Republican who is chairman of the
conservative House Republican Study Committee.

20 While there has been significant drama on Capitol Hill over when, whether, and whom the House
Republicans would pick a new leader, the basic problems facing House Republicans remain unchanged. A
Democrat sits in the White House. Republicans hold the Senate, but they lack a filibuster-proof majority.
Ryan is also a reluctant leader. Speaker is not a job he wanted. He agreed to pursue it only after majority
leader Kevin McCarthy dropped out of the bidding under conservative criticism, and after he was lobbied
25 by figures such as Romney and Boehner. Ryan supporters are heaping enormous expectations on him,
hoping that he can not only cure House dysfunction, but also unite the party like no one else in Washington
or on the presidential trail has been able to do. “He’s a game-changer. He’s an opportunity for us to really
start anew,” Representative Jeb Hensarling, a Texas Republican and chairman of the House Financial
Services Committee, said in an interview.

30 But already there are signs of fraying within the party.
“I think there’s probably a honeymoon period, but it’ll be very brief because we’ve got some big
issues,” said Representative Mike Simpson, an Idaho Republican. Treasury Secretary Jack Lew has said that
unless Congress authorizes more borrowing authority by Nov. 3, the federal government will default on its
debt and risk economic calamity. The latest short-term federal budget will expire Dec. 11, and if no action
35 is taken the government would shut down. Ryan has not yet outlined a strategy for dealing with those
issues. Both in the past have divided Republicans on how to proceed, with conservatives willing to threaten
default and shutdown in order to win concessions from Democrats, while most establishment-minded
Republicans have preached pragmatism and warned they alone would be blamed for the fallout.

40 Over the past several days, Ryan has tried to consolidate support and determine whether the various
factions in the House could support him — and some of his demands. In private meetings, he has said he
wants to create a broader strategy so that Republicans are all on the same page. “He thinks if he can
establish a sound strategy with a good vision, that should help unify us and perhaps make our day-to-day
activities a little less challenging,” said Representative Charlie Dent, a Pennsylvania Republican. Ryan on
Thursday received the endorsements of the Tuesday Group, a band of centrist lawmakers, and the
Republican Study Committee. On Wednesday, two-thirds of the conservative House Freedom Caucus said
45 they would support him, which was not the four-fifths majority required for a formal endorsement but
enough to ensure that Ryan has the votes needed to become speaker. “Maybe he believes, after talking to us,
that we’re not as crazy as some people make us out to be,” said Representative Mick Mulvaney, a South
Carolina Republican and a founding member of the House Freedom Caucus. “And we’re not really
interested in burning the building down tomorrow — next week, maybe. Please say that I said that tongue in
50 cheek.” [...]

Slate

Folks Before Kochs

By Reihan Salam

February 29, 2016

1 [...] Though the rise of Trump has taken almost everyone by surprise, we really should have seen it coming. America has been long overdue for something like Trumpism. In the years since the financial crisis, populist insurgencies have devastated mainstream parties of the center right and center left in virtually every market democracy. Barack Obama's rhetorical gifts mask the many ways in which he is a deeply conventional political figure, a man who trusts the wisdom of technocrats rather than seeking to overturn the established order. 5 One could argue that the Obama presidency rescued America's upper classes from a more ferocious post-crisis backlash, at least for a time. The twin insurgencies of Trump and Sanders demonstrate that the anger is still there—that it was just waiting for the right person to conjure it up. What separates the two politicians is that Sanders is in tune with the ideological orthodoxies of the left while Trump has no regard for those of the right. 10 This iconoclasm is one of the sources of his power.

More than anything else, Trump has demonstrated that white working-class voters have minds of their own. They will not simply line up behind the candidates selected for them by hedge-funders and industrialists during the "invisible primary." If we define working-class voters as those without a college degree, Ronald Brownstein of the *Atlantic* estimates that this bloc represents 53 percent of Republicans, split almost evenly between those 15 who are conservative Christians and those who are not. The Pew Research Center reports that in 2012, 53 percent of Republicans were part of families that earned less than \$75,000 a year. These groups, which tend to overlap, are Donald Trump's base. Ever since the Nixon era, Republicans have relied on the white working class to achieve political victories. Now, it has revolted against the GOP elite.

Why wouldn't they be furious? The Republican failure to defend the interests of working-class voters, and 20 to speak to their hopes and fears, has made Trump's authoritarianism dangerously alluring. Trump recognized that elite Republicans—a group rooted in affluent coastal metropolises and dominated by members of the credentialed upper middle class, which has shielded itself from the social and economic devastation that has wreaked such havoc in less-privileged corners of the country—often fall prey to wishful thinking about the rank-and-file voters who actually elect GOP candidates. They imagine that working- and middle-class conservatives are passionately 25 devoted to the things *they* care about—tax cuts and entitlement reform—when these voters are far more passionate about other issues: economic nationalism, limits on less-skilled immigration, and minimum-wage hikes.

Having recognized this chasm separating the Republican donor class from the grassroots, Trump has exploited it brilliantly. He has defended entitlement programs, and he has bashed bankers. He has defied the elite 30 consensus on trade and immigration. He is channeling the Republican id, and in doing so he may have already dashed conservative hopes of winning the White House. Why can't his GOP opponents convince Republican voters that they would do a far better job than Trump of defending middle-class economic interests? The answer is that they are trapped by the delusions of the donor class, and they can't break free.

In the coming weeks and months, old-school conservatives will do everything they can to defeat a man 35 they consider a charlatan and provocateur. Alexander Burns, Maggie Haberman, and Jonathan Martin of the *New York Times* report that leading GOP donors and congressional bigwigs are mounting a desperate rearguard action to do just that. But whether or not they succeed, the GOP establishment must acknowledge that the Trump campaign has surfaced important and uncomfortable truths. Those truths can no longer be evaded. If the Republican Party is to have a future, it must learn from Trump's rise. By launching a frontal attack on movement 40 conservatism, Trump has demonstrated its weakness and the failure of its stale policy agenda to resonate with voters. In doing so, he is giving conservatives a once-in-a-generation opportunity to change direction. There is only one way forward in the post-Trump era. The GOP can no longer survive as the party of tax cuts for the rich. It must reinvent itself as the champion of America's working- and middle-class families. In every campaign, Democrats and Republicans talk about getting the working class and the middle class back on their feet. Those are 45 almost always empty words. The GOP must now become a genuinely populist party, putting the concerns of voters ahead of those of donors. [...]

Tablet

Hillary Clinton has won my millennial, feminist vote

By Jordana Narin

March 21, 2016

I have a confession: I'm supporting Hillary Clinton for president.

This shouldn't be a radical admission. After all, as the former Secretary of State herself reminded everyone last week, she has received more votes this election season than any other candidate running for any party's nomination, including Donald Trump. Clearly, I'm in good company, right?

Wrong. Because even though I'm a woman—Clinton's target demographic and the "identity" group with which she does best—I'm also a college student. A millennial. *Young*. And by an overwhelming margin (in Iowa, it was 6:1), voters just like me are not rallying behind the only woman to ever win a presidential primary; instead they are aligning themselves with Bernie Sanders. Article after article afterarticle attempts to explain this groundswell of young, female support for Sanders, but I don't need them to understand the phenomenon: Until recently, I was living it.

I entered college a Hillary Clinton enthusiast. The first poster I plastered in my dorm room was a piece of red, white, and navy blue cardboard from 2008 with "Hillary for President" printed in bold typeface across it. Over the next two years, though, during my tenure as a board member of the College Democrats no less, I grew cynical—and, as college students are wont to do, far more liberal. So when Bernie Sanders threw his hat into the 2016 race to challenge Clinton for the Democratic nomination, I eagerly endorsed him. My posts on social media became, for the most part, hypercritical of Clinton and hyper-sympathetic to Sanders. I was made an admin for a "Students for Bernie Sanders" group on Facebook. I even became a regular contributor to his campaign (only \$5 a month, but five bucks is five bucks, especially to a college student). All the while, I refused to accept that supporting a male candidate over a female one was bad feminism.

Now, after 29 Democratic primary contests, I've finally come aboard the Clinton train. Again. What changed? A lot. I still like Bernie; he's still my dream Jewish grandpa, and if he wins the nomination, I'll go door-knocking for him in the fall. But the nexus of my electoral "evolution" (to borrow a term my girl Hil uses often), can be boiled down to one thing: sexism. As Clinton solidified her lead over Sanders, I began to observe an increased intensity in the opposition she faced—from the media, from Republicans, and even from within her own Party, via the "Bernie Bros," etc. For nothing but the sake of eventual Democratic party unity, I found myself defending her, time and again. In doing so, I rediscovered the merits of a Clinton candidacy. Clinton is far from perfect—her policies have a tendency to follow political trends rather than set or revolutionize them—but her qualifications, from her pro-bono advocacy in Arkansas early in her career to her time as an integral member of President Obama's cabinet (to name but a few), are undeniable. And surely, at least to those left of center, she's a better option than anyone the GOP is optioning this election cycle. Especially Donald Trump.

Yet much of the vitriol aimed at her obscures this. What's more, while much of thecriticism of Clinton isn't explicitly sexist, too much of it is sexist-adjacent—that is, delivered in coded language and dog whistles that make the playing field uneven. I'm not voting for Hillary Clinton now simply because she is a woman. My vote is the product of a long list of factors, not the least of which includes her legislative experience and foreign policy acumen. But the sexism that's been flung her way—by the right and by the left—has definitely fueled my fire.

Do I wish Clinton had been more progressive in the past? Of course. But there's a reason that Sanders, arguably the most progressive candidate in the race, is an older, white man: I'm firmly convinced that in the '90s, especially, when both candidates truly entered the public sphere, the female equivalent to Sanders would never have been taken seriously. Because his whiteness and his maleness don't disrupt political norms, his policies can. And don't even get me started about his delivery. As Sanders gets to rail against the rising cost of college education, she has to worry about sounding shrill. As he gets to preach the advantages of a single payer healthcare system (which Clinton herself advocated for in 2008), she has to worry about smiling enough. As he gets to bark about income inequality, she has to worry about Donald Trump insinuating she's a bitch.

I'm sick of the double standards placed on women in politics and believe that the only way we can begin to change them is by electing a woman to the highest office in the land. [...]

New York Magazine

Republicans Wish Non-Racist Nominee Donald Trump Would Stop Saying Racist Things

By Jonathan Chait

June 7, 2016

1 Paul Ryan appeared today in Washington, D.C.'s impoverished and overwhelmingly black Anacostia neighborhood to promote the House Republican agenda. The visit was steeped in racial symbolism, a long-planned photo op intended to convey Ryan's no-doubt-sincere belief that his party's policies would better the lives of the urban poor by freeing them from the dependence of subsidy (and, by reducing taxes and regulations on business
5 owners, supplying them with more jobs). Unfortunately for Ryan, the visit came as the news media was in a full-blown frenzy over racist comments made by Donald Trump against Gonzalo Curiel, the judge in his fraud trial. The contradiction between the two could not be ignored. And so Ryan made an astonishing confession. "Claiming a person can't do their job because of their race is sort of like the textbook definition of a racist comment," he acknowledged. And yet he conceded he would support Trump for president anyway.

10 There is nothing inherently racist about Ryan's policy agenda. The arguments for enormous, regressive tax cuts, deregulation of finance and carbon pollution, and large reductions in spending assistance for the poor may be unpersuasive, but they have no intellectual connection to racism. The trouble for Republicans is that building a real-world constituency for these policies does rely on racism. Conservatives stopped the momentum of the New Deal in the mid-1960s only when they associated it with support for the black underclass. Republican politics has grown
15 increasingly racialized over time, a trend that has dramatically accelerated during the Obama era.

20 Over the last eight years, the tension between these two things has grown unbearable for conservatives. Republican voting support is increasingly coterminous with white racial resentment even as conservatives firmly believe in their own racial innocence. Conservatives have built an alternative history in which racism, rather than migrating to the Republican Party as white Southerners revolted against the Democratic Party's embrace of civil rights, remained in the Democratic Party all along. Racism, they insist, is a practice of the race-conscious left, not the right, which has long been cleansed of the racist taint. Republicans constantly liken President Obama and his policies to segregationists or to slavery, and cast themselves as the heirs to the civil-rights movement. Conservatives deny the existence of racism in the Republican Party as a matter of doctrinal sanctity, just as Soviet authorities had to officially deny the existence of poverty in the USSR.

25 Trump has ratcheted the tension between theory and reality to unbearable levels. Of course, Trump has exploited racism for years, from his public demand to execute what turned out to be innocent black youths a quarter-century ago to his birtherism to his crude bigotry toward Mexican and Muslim immigrants. But because his outbursts against Curiel are bigoted in such an undisguised fashion, with no policy pretext to hide behind, they forced the question into the open. The responses of various figures on the right have fallen into two broad
30 categories. Conservatives who continue to reject Trump as an ideological impostor have frankly denounced his bigotry. "Saying someone can't do a specific job because of his or her race is the literal definition of 'racism,'" tweeted Nebraska senator Ben Sasse, the staunchest holdout of the anti-Trump forces among elected Republicans. "These were not racially tinged or racially charged attacks. This was racism plain and simple," wrote Erick Erickson. This is a natural outgrowth of their position that Trump is not a conservative at all, and his identification
35 with the Republican Party nothing more than a temporary error.

40 On the other hand, the overwhelming majority of Republicans committed to supporting Trump have engaged in various tortured constructions. "I would not have said what he said, but then I don't know all the facts," asserted Senator Charles Grassley. "My experience with Donald Trump is he doesn't have a prejudicial bone in his body," said Orrin Hatch. Former Bush administration attorney general Alberto Gonzales gently reprimanded the front-runner like so: "If the criticism is solely based on Curiel's race, that is something voters will take into account in deciding whether he is fit to be president." The "if" construction of this sentence is its crowning touch, treating Trump's repeated, blunt insistence that Curiel's "Mexican heritage" presented an "inherent conflict of interest" as some sort of mysterious hypothetical. Other Republicans edged closer to outright denunciation. *The Wall Street Journal* editorial page slapped Trump's wrist — "giving his political opponents ammunition ... pettiness ...
45 obnoxious ... racist implications" — without drawing any overt conclusions about Trump's racism. Even those Republicans willing to describe the statement as racist (and not merely as something that implied racism) presented it as a singular mistake that did not reflect their nominee's belief system. "I think it's wrong. He needs to stop saying it," scolded Marco Rubio. [...]

New York Magazine

Can We Start Taking Political Correctness Seriously Now?

By Jonathan Chait

November 10, 2015

1 The student protest at the University of Missouri began as a response to a serious problem — outbursts
of vile racism on campus — and quickly devolved into an expression of a renewed left-wing hostility to
freedom of expression. At the protest on Missouri's campus yesterday, on a space that is expressly open to free
expression, protesters barred journalists from covering the demonstrations. In one scene, protesters surrounded
5 and harassed Tim Tai, a photographer with the student newspaper, chanting, "Hey, hey, ho, ho, journalists have
got to go." The scene is captured on a video here, which rewards close watching until the end, where Melissa
Click, a professor of mass media working with the protest movement, calls out, "Help me get this reporter out
of here. I need some muscle over here."

10 It is possible — and, for many sympathizers on the left, convenient — to dismiss these sorts of incidents as
just so much college high jinks. "College students have been saying stupid things since the invention of college
students," argues Daniel Drezner, in a passage that attracted widespread support on the left. It is probably true
that a strange and sudden new hypersensitivity among young people has produced a widespread expectation of a
right to be protected from offense. It is also undeniably true that outbursts of political correctness
15 disproportionately take place in campus settings. In recent weeks, UCLA, Wesleyan, and Yale have seen left-
wing student activism aimed at shutting down the expression of contrary viewpoints.

20 Even if it were the case that political correctness was totally confined to campuses, it would not make the
phenomenon unimportant. Colleges have disproportionate influence over intellectual life, and political
movements centered on campuses can spread well beyond them (anti-Vietnam began as a bunch of wacky kids,
too). But to imagine p.c. as simply a thing college kids do relieves us of taking it seriously as a coherent set of
beliefs, which it very much is. Political correctness is a system of thought that denies the legitimacy of political
pluralism on issues of race and gender. It manifests itself most prominently in campus settings not because it's a
passing phase, like acne, but because the academy is one of the few bastions of American life where the p.c. left
can muster the strength to impose its political hegemony upon others. The phenomenon also exists in other
nonacademic left-wing communities, many of them virtual ones centered on social media, and its defenders
25 include professional left-wing intellectuals.

30 The upsurge of political correctness is not just greasy-kid stuff, and it's not just a bunch of weird,
unfortunate events that somehow keep happening over and over. It's the expression of a political culture with
consistent norms, and philosophical premises that happen to be incompatible with liberalism. The reason every
Marxist government in the history of the world turned massively repressive is not because they all had the
misfortune of being hijacked by murderous thugs. It's that the ideology itself prioritizes class justice over
individual rights and makes no allowance for legitimate disagreement. (For those inclined to defend p.c. on the
grounds that racism and sexism are important, bear in mind that the forms of repression Marxist government set
out to eradicate were hardly imaginary.)

35 American political correctness has obviously never perpetrated the brutality of a communist government,
but it has also never acquired the powers that come with full control of the machinery of the state. The
continuous stream of small-scale outrages it generates is a testament to an illiberalism that runs deep down to its
core (a character I tried to explain in my January essay).

40 The scene in Columbia and the recent scene in New Haven share a similar structure: jeering student mobs
expressing incredulity at the idea of political democracy. As far as the students are concerned, they represent the
cause of anti-racism, a fact that renders the need for debate irrelevant. Defenses of p.c. tactics simply sweep
aside objections to the tactics as self-interested whining. "It's not about creating an intellectual space," shouts
one Yale. Notably, the events at Yale have redounded in New Haven to the benefit of the protesters, who
have renewed their demands, and Nicholas Christakis, the Yale administrator seen pleading futilely for reason,
issuing apologies for his behavior. Likewise, at Wesleyan, the student newspaper that sparked outrage by
45 publishing the op-ed of a student (cautiously) questioning elements of the Black Lives Matter movement has
been harshly sanctioned. [...]

New York Magazine

New Antarctic Melting Study Confirms Voting Republican Would Trigger Worldwide Catastrophe

By Jonathan Chait

March 31, 2016

1 The good news on climate change is that the politics and the technology arrayed to transition
the world away from greenhouse gasses are both moving rapidly and in tandem. The bad news is that
the scale of the challenge itself may also be accelerating. A new study finds that the West Antarctic ice
sheet may be melting at a far more rapid pace than previously believed. Sea-level rise is just one of the
5 dangers posed by climate change, but that danger may be more imminent than anybody believed.

Let's review the state of play heading into the presidential election. The Obama
administration's Clean Power Plan is the largest element of its domestic program to reduce carbon
emissions — it's a set of targets for every state to reduce the greenhouse-gas emissions from its power
system. The Clean Power Plan faces a legal challenge from Republicans. The Supreme Court recently
10 froze implementation of that plan until the courts resolve its status. The challenge will be heard in the
D.C. Circuit court on June 2. The panel hearing that case will consist of two Democratic appointees and
one Republican appointee, and is nearly certain to affirm the administration's plan. Republicans will then
appeal the case to the Supreme Court. But since the Court is currently tied 4-4, and five votes would be
needed to overturn the D.C. Circuit, the case would be upheld. However, if Republicans block the
45 appointment of Merrick Garland to the Court, which seems likely, and win the presidential election, which
is possible, they can appoint the deciding justice. And that justice could well be seated in time to hear the
appeal, quite likely dooming the Clean Power Plan.

A president determined to keep working to limit climate change could easily regroup in the
face of a legal defeat and design a different set of climate regulations. The Clean Power Plan's
20 requirements do not take effect until 2022. But a Republican president would not do anything to limit
climate change. The Republican Party is institutionally committed to blocking any action to reduce
greenhouse-gas emissions. The largest and most influential bloc of thought within the party dismisses the
field of climate science as a massive hoax concocted by scientists to increase their own power (a theory
expounded by Senator James Inhofe, chairman of the Committee on Environment and Public Works, author
25 of *The Greatest Hoax: How the Global Warming Conspiracy Threatens Your Future*, and a believer that
the existence of snow in February in Washington disproves climate science).

A tinier, far less influential bloc within the party accepts the legitimacy of climate science but
argues against any political action on the grounds that it would be impossible or hopelessly expensive. For
instance, the Manhattan Institute's James Manzi — one of the most moderate voices on climate science
30 within the party — has urged Republicans to come up with non-science-denying reasons to permit the
continued cost-free dumping of greenhouse-gas emissions into the atmosphere. "The challenge posed by
climate change is not one of averting a global disaster in which Manhattan becomes an underwater theme
park ... " Manzi wrote in his last climate manifesto. "Despite the dire warnings from progressives, the best
models show us that global warming is a problem that is expected to have only a limited impact on the
35 world economy." In reality, the Manhattan-as-underwater-theme-park scenario remains very much in
play. The latest modeling projects a sea rise of five to six feet by the end of the century, with a sea-level
rise of a foot per decade after that. That rise could be mitigated if the political response under way
worldwide continues. And things are happening. China is reducing the carbon intensity of its economy
very rapidly. Innovators in the private sector, responding to signals from political leaders who have
40 committed to carbon reductions, have brought down the cost of clean energy nearly to parity already, and
the cost curve is continuing to head downward. It sounds partisan to say, but it remains true: The fate of
humanity rests to a very large degree on keeping the Republican Party out of power for as long as possible.
[...]

This is What it Takes for Mass Murder to be "Terrorism"

Recent tragic mass shootings in California and Colorado have reignited a longstanding debate over when it is appropriate to call mass killing in the U.S. an act of terrorism. The debate has more significance in ideological and partisan battles than it does in the law. While federal law creates some special authority to charge international terrorists, there is no statute that allows the federal government to charge an individual with the crime of "domestic terrorism."

Early signs suggest that the unspeakable killing of 14 people in San Bernardino, Calif., may have been motivated by warped Islamic radicalism. If the shooting was motivated by Islamic radicalism, it was surely terrorism, but we do not yet know enough to label the crime with certainty. The news that the female shooter pledged her loyalty to ISIS on Facebook moves the investigation closer toward calling it terrorism. But the shooting may also have drawn on a separate strain of mass killings—those motivated by workplace revenge. Such shootings generally lack the ideological element essential to terrorism. We also do not yet know whether the shooters acted as "lone wolf" domestic terrorists or whether there was international involvement. Regardless of the label placed on the shootings at this point, the FBI will investigate with all of its tools.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation uses a definition of terrorism that tracks with the Patriot Act. "Terrorism" encompasses "acts dangerous to human life that violate federal or state law" and "appear intended (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination or kidnapping." It distinguishes between international terrorism (acts occurring abroad) and domestic terrorism, which occurs primarily within the U.S.

This definition appropriately focuses on the criminal's intent. The actions of mentally deranged individuals, such as the shooters at Virginia Tech, Sandy Hook, Columbine, and Aurora, whose purpose was nothing more than to kill as many people as possible, are terrible and terrifying, but they are not terrorism.

By contrast, the killing of doctors who provide abortions and their patients is driven by a desire to intimidate and coerce abortion providers and their patients. The killings send a broad and chilling message that abortion will be met with violence. It seems likely that Robert Dear, who reportedly vowed "no more body parts" to law enforcement, falls into this category. Similarly, according to his writings, Dylann Roof slaughtered nine African Americans during bible study at Emanuel A.M.E. Church in Charleston with the intent of starting a "race war." His racially motivated killings became the most recent chapter in what Attorney General Loretta Lynch called our oldest form of domestic terrorism—the use of violence to intimidate and oppress people because of race.

Because these forms of domestic terrorism present distinct problems, we have adopted specialized statutes to address them. The Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act specifically punishes the use of force to injure, intimidate or interfere with people seeking or providing reproductive health services. Federal hate crime statutes specifically prohibit racially motivated violence. As a legal matter, therefore, it adds little to call this conduct terrorism. Some still push to designate it as terrorism because they think the label will bring greater urgency. In reality, structures are in place in the Department of Justice, including the FBI, to investigate and prosecute these matters vigorously as civil-rights violations in coordination with the agencies that investigate terrorism.

In the absence of substantial legal implications, the debate over use of the term "terrorism" has been driven in large part by ideology and politics. President Barack Obama has been reluctant to label the San Bernardino killings terrorism, noting that there is much we still do not know about the shooters' motivation. In part, the President's posture reflects the traditional reticence of chief executives to trump the work of law enforcement professionals by speaking prematurely. He likely also does not want to appear to jump to the conclusion that this is terrorism simply because the shooters were Muslims.

Doing so plays into the hands of enemies who want to portray the U.S. as an enemy of Islam and arouse passions against Muslims in this country.

Conversely, Republican presidential candidates have been quick to denounce the killings as radical Islamic terrorism. They view the President's caution as further proof that he is weak in fighting terrorists at home and that his Middle East policies have failed. They argue that they would be stronger in the fight against terrorism. On the other hand, many have resisted calling the shootings in Colorado domestic terrorism and have been quick to reject any connection between pro-life ideology and the shootings.

The definition of terrorism for law enforcement purposes is clear: It turns on the intent of the perpetrator, who must seek to coerce civilians or change government policy through life threatening actions. Terrorists are driven by ideology, whether it is the anti-government radicalism of the Weather Underground of the 1960's and 1970's or Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh, the anti-abortion radicalism of serial bomber Eric Rudolph, the white supremacy of the Ku Klux Klan and other groups, or the distorted ideology of radicalized Muslims.

William Yeomans. *Time Magazine*. Dec. 4, 2015

William Yeomans is a Fellow in Law and Government at American University Law School, who spent 26 years as an attorney in the U.S. Department of Justice.

As the \$20 bill gets a new face, Andrew Jackson's sins are recalled

Tubman is in, Hamilton is saved and Jackson is banished to the back of the bill. That is the news from the United States Treasury, where it was announced on Wednesday that the face of a venerable and brave African-American woman will be the first to grace the front of the nation's paper currency.

Harriet Tubman, a slave who escaped from bondage and then devoted her life to freeing more of her brothers and sisters from the South's slave empire, will soon take center stage on the \$20 bill. For years there has been a push to make room for someone besides famous white men on the money that passes through our hands every day. A weak attempt was made when suffragette Susan B. Anthony and, later, Shoshone guide Sacagawea took their turns on the little-used dollar coin. Though the image on the Sacagawea coin, in particular, was lovely, agitation for a non-white, non-male person on more heavily utilized currency only increased.

Last June, the Treasury laid out plans to pick a worthy female to replace our country's first Treasury secretary, Alexander Hamilton, on the \$10 note. That scheme ran into resistance, not only from feminists who insisted a woman should get the prime spot on the more ubiquitous \$20 bill, but also because Hamilton, a lesser-known Founding Father, had suddenly become cool with the kids, thanks to the huge success of the Broadway rap musical "Hamilton."

While Hamilton's new fan base has ensured his face will stay on the ten, Andrew Jackson's popularity has been falling, making him an easier target for demotion. For decades, Democratic Party organizations around the U.S. held annual Jefferson/Jackson dinners, so named to honor the two leaders considered to be the fathers of the party. Recently, though, activists have complained that both Thomas Jefferson and Jackson were slave owners and therefore are no longer the best representatives of modern, multi-ethnic Democrats. Jefferson has a long list of redeeming attributes that makes it possible to counter the ire of revisionists. The author of the Declaration of Independence openly recognized the evil of slavery, even if he could not break from the economic thrall of the institution. Jackson, on the other hand, is harder to defend. Not only did he have an early career as a slave trader, there was the heinous matter of genocide.

As president, Jackson engineered the forced removal of peaceful Indian tribes from their homes in the South to lands west of the Mississippi River. For the most part, these were natives who had assimilated and become farmers and shopkeepers. That did not prevent the confiscation of their property and a forced march along the notorious Trail of Tears, where the Indians died by the thousands from hunger, cold and disease. This racist land grab by white settlers and slaveholders was opposed by 19th century notables such as Davy Crockett and Ralph Waldo Emerson. It was also declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court. Jackson ignored them all and heartlessly enforced the policy.

Jackson has had more than enough time in an honored place on our currency. (His image bumped the picture of President Grover Cleveland from the bill in 1929.) Besides, he will not entirely disappear. Treasury Secretary Jack Lew said Old Hickory will show up somewhere on the back of the twenty, if only in a representation of the equestrian statue that stands across from the White House in Lafayette Square.

These changes to the currency are, predictably, being derided by at least a few conservatives. Ben Carson, the failed Republican presidential candidate, called Jackson "a tremendous president" and said Tubman should perhaps be relegated to the nearly unused \$2bill. Kristin Tate, one of the numerous young, attractive libertarian women vying to follow Ann Coulter's lucrative path into the right-wing media's pundit pool, was more caustic. "We must remove historical figures to make room for a Muslim, a Native American, a Chinese American, an Indian and a transgender person," Tate said, tongue firmly in cheek. "I personally suggest Caitlyn Jenner. Anything less would be offensive."

It is obviously impossible for the conservative chattering class to resist characterizing these changes in America's currency as pathetic political correctness, but it is worth noting that a lot of them have been lobbying to get Ronald Reagan on the fifty in place of Ulysses S. Grant, or on the dime, where he would bump liberal icon Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Objectively, though, should we open a space for yet another white male president before giving recognition to great American women and inspiring civil rights leaders? Our history is richer than that.

David Horsey. Los Angeles Times. April 26 2016

Two-time Pulitzer Prize winner David Horsey is a political commentator for the Los Angeles Times.

Hollywood's Hypocritical Love-Hate Relationship With Guns

- Hollywood serves as a paradox of weapons morality. Its participants are free to condemn and lecture us on the depravity of individuals and organizations affiliated with guns, with a glaring exemption granted to themselves and their industry. The Acela Set is no less occupied with rewarding themselves. One thing about the current Democratic Party election season: It clearly brings out the anti-constitutionalists. Sure, they couch their document-lacerating platforms with palatable euphemisms, such as "common-sense regulations" or "reasonable safety laws." These fluffy terms do little to veil the reality that they intend to encroach directly upon the rights our supreme law has commanded shall not be infringed.
- 10 Hillary Clinton's platform includes stricter gun regulations. She uses this stance as a cudgel against Bernie Sanders, who once backed a law protecting gun manufacturers from wrongful-death lawsuits. Not be outflanked on the left wing, Sanders now says that law needs to be repealed, paving the way for people to sue gun makers out of existence.
- In their quest to make us a less-armed populace, these proponents share a common enemy: The National Rifle Association. It is a testament to the effectiveness and accuracy of that organization that not a single firearm outrage can be uttered without an automatic connection to the group. School shootings, highway snipers, and homegrown terrorist attacks consistently are laid at the feet of the NRA. (Some may say, "What about Chicago's high gun-death rates?" but note I said firearm *outrage*. The gun-snatchers always bypass that city's victims.)
- 15 Little evidence supports these accusations. The NRA supports background checks, educated handling, firearm safety, comprehensive training, and legal usage. Accusations against it tend to ring hollow since the organization does not promote activities that lead to "mass shootings." Every gun tragedy involves breaking numerous laws and contradicting the NRA's recommended use—such as funneling rifles to Mexican cartel members, for just one random example.
- 25 As gun opponents place the NRA in their cross-hairs (not apologizing for that macro-aggression) they expose the impotency of their outrage. Yet another industry guilty of the same charges manages to elude being called complicit. Indulge me in a small exercise. Take a look at the following phrases that you undoubtedly have either heard before, or a variation thereof: The NRA romanticizes a pro-gun agenda The NRA creates a culture of violence The NRA profits from glorifying guns These have become the tropes politicians and activist groups like Moms Demand, Everytown, et al. employ for demonization. These accusations are used interchangeably, based on the particular details of a gun event. Did someone use a stolen gun, taking the background checks argument off the table? Then blame the NRA for fostering a violent atmosphere. Homegrown terrorists shoot up San Bernardino? They wouldn't be armed if NRA didn't ensure it's "easy" to buy guns. But here is a stark reality. The proof behind these accusations is always ethereal. Nothing tangible is ever offered to bolster the charges. The mere suggestion is enough, because the accusation has been bandied so frequently.
- 35 Now for the interactive portion of this article. Go back and look at those three comments, but apply a simple alteration. Replace "The NRA" with one word: Hollywood. Not only do all of the phrases become more accurate, but you are greeted with recall imagery. *Does Hollywood create a culture of violence?* Its entire product defines culture, and we all have instant recollection of a movie or TV show with heavy firearm visuals. *Hollywood romanticizes a pro-gun agenda?* The studios sure have not curtailed titles with plotlines wrapped around heroic firearm use. *Does Hollywood profit from glorifying guns?* Not only is this an obvious "Yes," there is no shortage of guns on the very posters used to *sell* their films.
- Despite this, no one hurls vitriolic charges at Hollywood on par with the regular NRA taunts. The profit accusation is especially stark in the juxtaposition. The NRA is not in business; it derives funds from membership fees, paid willingly by people who want the organization to continue its practices. Hollywood studios are instead profit-driven, and they create a cultural product of gun-steeped content for the direct purpose of generating revenues. The industry touts guns, lovingly displays firearms, and glorifies the violence the weaponry can deliver. All of this for the singular purpose of turning a profit. Each of us can instantly conjure specific visuals supporting this reality.
- 45 Despite the voluminous catalogue of blatant evidence that studios are culpable of the very charges foisted by the rifle-nabbers, they rarely endure the insults and blame. This goes beyond mere hypocrisy. It's a blind spot, as if all gun-control groups and politicians have suffered the same stroke. Activists wishing to blunt a gun culture would do better than to attack a constitutional protection lobby and instead try to curtail the industry that relies on guns for corporate earnings.

Bring It On

Last week, Donald Trump told late-night television host Jimmy Kimmel that he would debate Bernie Sanders, so long as ABC agreed to make a hefty donation to charity. It was a joke, but the Sanders campaign responded seriously — bring it on. Less than a full day after Sanders accepted his challenge, Trump announced he wouldn't take part. I don't debate losers, Trump explained.

The prospect of a Trump-Sanders debate slipped away, at least for the time being. But in the twenty-four hours when it seemed a possibility, people of all political stripes understood that pitting the two anti-establishment candidates against one another would be a significant political event. Granted, some liberal commentators were quick to dismiss the proposed debate as nothing more than a distraction. Of course, this objection fits their pattern of painting Sanders's continued participation in the Democratic race as a irresponsible breach of party etiquette, potentially destructive to Hillary Clinton's chances in the general election.

But the country needs a Trump-Sanders debate, if only to show the increasingly out-of-touch punditry what most ordinary voters already know — the two candidates may rail against the same broken system, but they're not "making the same pitch," as the *Washington Post* claims. A huge chasm separates Trump's politics from Sanders's.

Still, many in the mainstream media are fascinated with the supposed similarities between the two candidates — as if there is any equivalence between a xenophobic billionaire with powerful friends and a committed socialist whose grassroots campaign is funded by small donors. Many commentators would have us believe that Trump and Sanders are two sides of the same coin, with mirror-image policy positions and a common voter base that is invariably white, male, and pissed-off.

Of course, a quick look at the demographics casts doubt on that line. Despite the media's best efforts to paint Sanders supporters as spoiled, affluent white men — clinging desperately to their social status — the numbers just don't add up. In fact, it seems clear that the best indicator for Sanders support is age — Sanders enjoys overwhelming support from people under thirty-five, regardless as to race and gender. Trump's base, meanwhile, actually is almost entirely white — not too surprising for someone who openly calls for the deportation of Muslims and Mexicans while accepting support from an openly white supremacist "super PAC." And Trump supporters are older. Back in September — when the candidate overtook his Republican challengers for the first time — about half of his supporters were between forty-five and sixty-four, and another 34 percent were sixty-five and up. Less than 3 percent were under thirty.

Despite the liberal insistence that Trump draws his support exclusively from poor whites — who liberals and conservatives alike would just as soon exclude from American politics altogether — the median income of Trump supporters is actually \$73,000 a year, well above the national median of \$51,000. It's also higher than the median income of Sanders supporters, which hovers around \$60,000.

But while reports claiming some equivalency between the two are misguided, it is true that Trump and Sanders supporters have at least one thing in common — they have no confidence in the American political system as it's currently constituted, and they're urgently demanding change. That's why a Trump-Sanders debate is so important.

This election season has activated a sprawling constituency of disaffected citizens — a bloc of voters who see the ideal of American prosperity as an unattainable fantasy and the current political system as an intolerable outrage. Two candidates are speaking to this mass dissatisfaction, and winning tremendous popular support in the process — but only one of them has a vision worth defending. Perhaps picking up on the swelling disaffection of the electorate, pundits have stoked fears that Sanders supporters are easy marks for Trump — or vice versa — despite the utter lack of substantive political similarities between the two candidates. Elites' control over the limits of political legitimacy is slipping — and they seem to know it. The Sanders defector — that hypothetical Bernie supporter sure to cast an anti-Hillary protest vote for Trump come November — seems poised to replace the "Bernie Bro" as the media's favored anti-Sanders strawman.

But it's true that for down-and-out workers in the post-2008 economy, the alternatives on offer are far and few between — and many people, feeling left out of the American dream, are desperate for an alternative. A recent *New York Times* article from Wilkes County, North Carolina — one of the counties hardest hit by the recession, where median household income fell more than 30 percent between 2000 and 2014 — made the stakes clear. In Wilkes County, which is 93 percent white and at least 23 percent poor, some voters support Trump and some support Sanders, but everyone seems to agree that the American dream is a bust and political change long overdue.

Jonah Walters. *Jacobin Magazine*. 28 May 2016.

Bernie Sander's Socialism Attracts Economic Illiterates

Many people of mature years are amazed at how many young people have voted for Senator Bernie Sanders and are enthusiastic about the socialism he preaches. Many of those older people have lived long enough to have seen socialism fail, time and again, in countries around the world. Venezuela, with all its rich oil resources, is currently on the verge of economic collapse, after its heady fling with socialism. But, most of the young have missed all that, and their dumbed-down education is far more likely to present the inspiring rhetoric of socialism than to present its dismal track record. Socialism is in fact a wonderful vision — a world of the imagination far better than any place anywhere in the real world, at any time over the thousands of years of recorded history. Even many conservatives would probably prefer to live in such a world, if they thought it was possible. Who would not want to live in a world where college was free, along with many other things, and where government protected us from the shocks of life and guaranteed our happiness? It would be Disneyland for adults! Free college of course has an appeal to the young, especially those who have never studied economics. But college cannot possibly be free. It would not be free even if there was no such thing as money.

Consider the costs of just one professor teaching just one course. He or she has probably spent more than 20 years being educated, from kindergarten to the Ph.D., before ending up standing in front of a class and trying to convey some of the knowledge picked up in all those years. That means being fed, clothed, and housed all those years, along with other expenses. All the people who grew the food, manufactured the clothing, and built the housing used by this one professor, for at least two decades, had to be compensated for their efforts or those efforts would not continue. And of course someone has to produce food, clothing, and shelter for all the students in this one course, as well as books, computers, and other requirements or amenities. Add up all these costs — and multiply by a hundred or so — and you have a rough idea of what attending college costs. Whether these costs are paid by using money in a capitalist economy or by some other mechanism in a feudal economy, a socialist economy, or whatever, there are heavy costs to pay.

Moreover, under any economic system, those costs are either going to be paid or there are not going to be any colleges. Money is just an artificial device for getting real things done. Those young people who understand this, whether clearly or vaguely, are not likely to be deterred from wanting socialism. Because what they really want is for somebody else to pay for their decision to go to college. A market economy is one in which whoever makes a decision is the one who pays for that decision. It forces people to be sure that what they want to do is really worth what it is going to cost.

Even the existing subsidies of college have led many people to go to college who have very little interest in, or benefit from, going to college, except for enjoying the social scene while postponing adult responsibilities for a few years. Whether judging by test results, by number of hours per week devoted to studying, or by on-campus interviews, it is clear that today's college students learn a lot less than college students once did. If college becomes "free," even more people can attend college without bothering to become educated and without acquiring any economically meaningful skills. More fundamentally, making all sorts of other things "free" means more of those things being wasted as well. Even worse, it means putting more and more of the decisions that shape our lives into the hands of politicians and bureaucrats who control the purse strings. Obamacare has given us a foretaste of what that means in reality, despite how wonderful it may sound in political rhetoric. Worst of all, government giveaways polarize society into segments, each trying to get what it wants at somebody else's expense, creating mutual bitterness that can tear a society apart. Some seem to blithely assume that "the rich" can be taxed to pay for what they want — as if "the rich" don't see what is coming and take their wealth elsewhere. —

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Thomas Sowell. *National Review*. February 17, 2016.

Thomas Sowell is an American economist, social theorist, political philosopher, and author, whose books include *Basic Economics*. He is currently senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

Will George Osborne or Boris Johnson become the next Prime Minister?

Agree or disagree with George Osborne he is better placed than Boris Johnson to become Conservative party leader
Steve Richards, *The Independent*, "Voices", 7 March 2016

(...) [A] possible candidate to be Prime Minister can be largely untested by the demands of power. Boris Johnson is widely considered to be a possible successor to David Cameron. Yet Boris has not served in the Cabinet and therefore has not been tested by the constraints and dilemmas of holding high office. He has not needed to make the case for a specific contentious policy for which he is responsible as a minister in the national media, nor has he had to seek the support of the parliamentary party and the wider electorate. Yet these are the fundamental tests of leadership.

In recent weeks, two possible rivals for the Tory leadership have faced very different dilemmas. Boris had to decide whether to back Remain or Leave in the referendum, a genuinely tough decision. Without doubt, the path he has chosen will be one of the formative experiences in his career and he will emerge the bigger for it.

Since that epic weekend when he declared for Out, he has faced the relatively easy task of explaining why he took the decision. For a journalist and a popular communicator, this should have been straightforward. So far he has blown this part of the sequence. His column in the Daily Telegraph explaining his decision for Out turned out to be a case for In – only following a second renegotiation and another referendum. On Sunday, in his interview with Andrew Marr, he was not clear about whether he envisaged the UK continuing to be part of the single market or entirely detached from it, seeking trade deals elsewhere.

The surprise was that anyone was especially surprised. This was the first time that Boris arrived in a studio for a national interview with the brief to defend and explain a specific policy and position. Cabinet ministers have to do it all the time. As London Mayor, he has been called upon to defend some city-wide policies but the level of scrutiny at a national level is far greater, involving a mastery of every single detail. The luxury of the big picture and a few jokes are not available when the stakes are so high.

The Chancellor George Osborne has also faced some tough decisions in recent days. Most important, Osborne had to decide how to proceed with next week's Budget. Normally, the spring Budget that follows a general election victory is crammed with tough, controversial decisions that can lead to raging short-term unpopularity but can also shape an entire era. Osborne has taken the momentous decision that he cannot afford to treat this Budget as a Chancellor normally would in the relative safety of a post-election period.

This post-election period is not safe. Instead, he is treating next week's event almost like a pre-election Budget, not wishing to alienate key voters with the referendum looming. Suddenly radical plans for pensions are dropped. Do not be surprised if motorists are spared a big hike in petrol prices. No doubt Osborne will continue to mistakenly cut public spending in real terms and with real consequences, but this will be a much more cautious budget than the one unveiled last summer, elements of which fell apart after two days of ecstatic media approval.

Agree or disagree with Osborne, he is in the top league of decision-making, under constant and intense pressure since becoming shadow chancellor in 2005. Imagine the dilemmas from his perspective as he approaches the coming budget: "I had hoped to raise revenue from pension reforms. Now I have dropped the plans, is there a popular, risk-free way of raising the cash? Perhaps I will not raise the cash. Where else can I cut? There is no more scope in welfare after last summer's shambles. What happens if I miss my deficit target? I only made the rigid early target in order to trap Labour before the election. Can I afford to miss the target again now we have won the election? What about capital spending? I told the Tory conference 'We are the builders', but we are not building very much". However nightmarish for the individual minister and however mistaken or alienating the judgements can be, facing the persistent dilemmas of power is the best preparation for leadership. Osborne has done so for a very long time.

Neither David Cameron nor Tony Blair, two recent long-serving prime ministers, had any direct experience of ministerial power before they moved into Number 10. These two very similar political figures were deeply exposed, partly because of their inexperience in terms of policy-making and in the international arena. Blair would not have been trapped in his Iraq nightmare if, say, he had been a Foreign Secretary. Cameron would not have got in a mess with NHS reforms in his first term nor have contemplated a referendum on EU membership if he had arrived in Number 10 more fully developed as a leader. Perhaps by the time there is a vacancy, Boris will have been tested and, crucially, passed the tests. But in terms of qualities for leadership Osborne and Theresa May, the Home Secretary, would arrive in Number 10 far better equipped than Boris if the contest takes place soon. (...)

Legalize It All

In 1994, John Ehrlichman, the Watergate co-conspirator, unlocked for me one of the great mysteries of modern American history: How did the United States entangle itself in a policy of drug prohibition that has yielded so much misery and so few good results? Americans have been criminalizing psychoactive substances since San Francisco's anti-opium law of 1875, but it was Ehrlichman's boss, Richard Nixon, who declared the first "war on drugs" and set the country on the wildly punitive and counterproductive path it still pursues. I'd tracked Ehrlichman, who had been Nixon's domestic-policy adviser, to an engineering firm in Atlanta, where he was working on minority recruitment. I barely recognized him. He was much heavier than he'd been at the time of the Watergate scandal two decades earlier, and he wore a mountain-man beard that extended to the middle of his chest.

At the time, I was writing a book about the politics of drug prohibition. I started to ask Ehrlichman a series of earnest, wonky questions that he impatiently waved away. "You want to know what this was really all about?" he asked with the bluntness of a man who, after public disgrace and a stretch in federal prison, had little left to protect. "The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the antiwar left and black people. You understand what I'm saying? We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did." I must have looked shocked. Ehrlichman just shrugged. Then he looked at his watch, handed me a signed copy of his steamy spy novel, *The Company*, and led me to the door.

Nixon's invention of the war on drugs as a political tool was cynical, but every president since — Democrat and Republican alike — has found it equally useful for one reason or another. Meanwhile, the growing cost of the drug war is now impossible to ignore: billions of dollars wasted, bloodshed in Latin America and on the streets of our own cities, and millions of lives destroyed by draconian punishment that doesn't end at the prison gate; one of every eight black men has been disenfranchised because of a felony conviction.

As long ago as 1949, H. L. Mencken identified in Americans "the haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy," an astute articulation of our weirdly Puritan need to criminalize people's inclination to adjust how they feel. The desire for altered states of consciousness creates a market, and in suppressing that market we have created a class of genuine bad guys — pushers, gangbangers, smugglers, killers. Addiction is a hideous condition, but it's rare. Most of what we hate and fear about drugs — the violence, the overdoses, the criminality — derives from prohibition, not drugs. And there will be no victory in this war either; even the Drug Enforcement Administration concedes that the drugs it fights are becoming cheaper and more easily available.

Now, for the first time, we have an opportunity to change course. Experiments in alternatives to harsh prohibition are already under way both in this country and abroad. Twenty-three states, as well as the District of Columbia, allow medical marijuana, and four — Colorado, Washington, Oregon, and Alaska — along with D.C., have legalized pot altogether. Several more states, including Arizona, California, Maine, Massachusetts, and Nevada, will likely vote in November whether to follow suit. Portugal has decriminalized not only marijuana but cocaine and heroin, as well as all other drugs. In Vermont, heroin addicts can avoid jail by committing to state-funded treatment. Canada began a pilot program in Vancouver in 2014 to allow doctors to prescribe pharmaceutical-quality heroin to addicts, Switzerland has a similar program, and the Home Affairs Committee of Britain's House of Commons has recommended that the United Kingdom do likewise. Last July, Chile began a legislative process to legalize both medicinal and recreational marijuana use and allow households to grow as many as six plants. After telling the BBC in December that "if you fight a war for forty years and don't win, you have to sit down and think about other things to do that might be more effective," Colombian president Juan Manuel Santos legalized medical marijuana by decree. In November, the Mexican Supreme Court elevated the debate to a new plane by ruling that the prohibition of marijuana consumption violated the Mexican Constitution by interfering with "the personal sphere," the "right to dignity," and the right to "personal autonomy." The Supreme Court of Brazil is considering a similar argument.

Depending on how the issue is framed, legalization of all drugs can appeal to conservatives, who are instinctively suspicious of bloated budgets, excess government authority, and intrusions on individual liberty, as well as to liberals, who are horrified at police overreach, the brutalization of Latin America, and the criminalization of entire generations of black men. It will take some courage to move the conversation beyond marijuana to ending all drug prohibitions, but it will take less, I suspect, than most politicians believe.

The Great Lakes: From Rustbelt to Bluebelt

CYCLING to and from work along the shores of Lake Michigan in the summer months, marvelling at the brilliant turquoise water in the morning and shades of pink, purple and deep blue in the evening, ever-
5 varying with wind and weather, is a treat for Chicagoans. The lake makes a majestic backdrop for the city's splendid architecture, and its beaches are a meeting place for people of all classes and colours in this still segregated place.

Lake Michigan and the four other lakes in the region are also the most important asset for Chicago's home state, Illinois, and the seven other American states that border the Great Lakes, according to a vocal school
10 of thought in the Midwest. "We wrecked our water by leading the industrial revolution," says John Austin, director of the Michigan Economic Centre. "Now we have to reclaim it to secure our future."

The Midwest's industrial boom was carried along by water. It was an important input for the car industry in Detroit, for breweries in Milwaukee, steelmakers in Gary, paper manufacturers in Muskegon and makers of furniture in Grand Rapids. Industries and communities flocked to river- and lakefronts (Chicago
15 had both). Water lubricated the new activity—and helped transport raw materials and finished wares. The new industrialists could use water at scale—and they abused it, pouring toxic waste into the sea-like lakes.

For a long time midwesterners ignored the damage done. It took fires on the Buffalo, Rouge, Detroit and Chicago rivers, fuelled by thick, oily sludge in the lakes and their arteries, for that to change. In 2010 the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative was born to improve water quality, clean up shorelines and restore
20 habitats and species. Five years later, on July 28th, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) submitted a progress report on the initiative to Congress. It says that five areas of concern have been cleaned up, 148,000 acres of wetlands, islands and coastal habitat restored, phosphorus run-off from farms reduced and invasive species rebuffed.

More needs to be done to clean up the lakes and rivers, but attention is now shifting from conservation to
25 the economic uses of abundant water. The Midwest has more than 20% of the world's (and 80% of America's) freshwater supply. It is trying to position itself as a centre for research and development for water-related technologies. Milwaukee's Water Council, which promotes investment, research and jobs in water technology, wants the region to be a wetter version of Silicon Valley. Its Global Water Centre is an incubator for water-based companies. The School of Freshwater Sciences at the University of Wisconsin's
30 Milwaukee branch is one of only three such freshwater schools in the world (the other two are in the Netherlands and in Singapore). Milwaukee calls itself the "World Water Hub". Delegations of visitors from around the world seem to believe it.

Curiously, given the abundance of the stuff, several corporate pioneers in water conservation and technology have their headquarters in the Midwest. Ford, a carmaker, has reduced the amount of water
35 used per vehicle produced by 30% in recent years, by assigning pipes for workers' drinking water in each plant and recycling all the rest, as well as by using less water to paint its cars. Cascade Engineering, a maker of car parts in Grand Rapids, produces cheap water filters for the developing world. Kohler, a Wisconsin-based maker of loos and washbasins, and Whirlpool, a maker of washing machines and dishwashers from Michigan, have joined forces to try and eliminate waste water. Over the next couple of
40 years the companies hope to find ways to make more homes entirely self-sustaining through the collection, storage and purification of rain and snow.

In addition to becoming a home for technological innovations, the Midwest hopes to attract water-guzzling industries such as food processing and chemicals to the Great Lakes' shores. For even if parched states such as California have their thirsty eye on the Midwest's water, the region's precious liquid cannot travel
45 far. In 2008 the Great Lakes Compact between the eight states bordering the lakes and Canada's Ontario and Quebec banned the diversion of water beyond the Great Lakes watershed, with few exceptions. Dean Amhaus, head of the Water Council, thinks climate change will in time turn water scarcity into a more pressing concern. That could in turn transform the Midwest from economic drifting to something like its former prosperity.

The Economist. August 1 2015.

How Do You Tell the Story of Black America in One Museum?

When the National Museum of African American History and Culture was conceived in 2003, Barack Obama was a state senator in Illinois; the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the death of Trayvon Martin was years in the future; and Bill Cosby was a symbol of family decency. Now, as the museum prepares to open here in September, the nation's first black president is nearing the end of his second term, Mr. Cosby is accused of being a sexual predator and Americans are engaged in the most charged conversation about race in decades.

As events have complicated the museum's original mission to be a "healing place," curators have rushed to catch up with history — documenting the rallies in Baltimore after the death of Freddie Gray — while wrestling with how to tell it. How far to go in depicting the cruelty of slavery and the pain of segregation? How to tell the awful story of Emmett Till? And where does this story end — with the accomplishments of President Obama or with scenes of unrest and violence? "What's included, what's not included, that's a really, really huge responsibility," said Kellie Carter Jackson, a scholar of 19th-century African-American history at Hunter College. "It's probably one of the most difficult tasks in curatorial history."

And there will be controversies. In an exhibit devoted to entertainment pioneers, for example, Mr. Cosby is included without mention of the dozens of women who say he sexually assaulted them. And the museum has decided to end its historical narrative not only with President Obama but also with the injustice and unrest that define the Black Lives Matter movement. "I know that we are not going to please everybody," said Lonnie G. Bunch III, 63, the museum's director. "Did we talk too much about religion and not enough about schools? Did we talk about class? Or what are we saying about gender?"

Like the Vietnam Memorial, the 9/11 Memorial Museum and other institutions built to record painful history, this museum has a challenging mandate — to commemorate, celebrate, provoke and heal. And in an effort to strike the right balance, the curatorial team (now counting 15) led by Mr. Bunch has spent more than a decade building the collection, conducting focus groups and consulting authorities like John Hope Franklin, Taylor Branch, Colin L. Powell and Oprah Winfrey.

As they grappled with questions about the institution's soul and mission, the curators were clear the museum should have relevance beyond a black audience. "The American story is profoundly African-American," said Paul Gardullo, a curator. "You don't get America without African America; you don't get our struggle for equality. And you don't get jazz. You don't get rock 'n' roll."

Throughout the process of soliciting and weighing opinions, Mr. Bunch said, a key decision was how to treat slavery. "There were those who said, 'It has to be about what they had done to us,' " he recalled. "There were those who felt that we had to de-emphasize it." In the end, he chose balance and resiliency. "We wanted to make sure you felt the pain of slavery, but you also pondered what it meant when one group of people did this to another group," he said. "Slavery was not the only way to define people. They had a strength that I wish I had."

The building on the National Mall was designed by the Tanzanian-born architect David Adjaye to evoke a crown motif from ancient Yoruban sculpture, or alternatively women's hands raised to the sky in prayer. It is planned so the historical journey begins below ground, in an exhibit called "Slavery and Freedom," featuring an auction block where people were sold and a cramped pinewood cabin where slaves were housed on Edisto Island in South Carolina. In striving for a fuller picture, the museum will include uplifting stories, like those about free black pioneers who farmed the Midwest in the 19th century. "It's not only enslaved people," said Michèle Gates Moresi, a curator at the museum, "but free blacks, and white people who didn't enslave people."

The tone of depictions was also a concern: How viscerally should the museum present the violence of slavery? So while shackles and a whip are shown, the exhibit on slave ships does not try to recreate the wretched conditions. Instead, visitors will see a few remnants — a pulley block used to hoist a sail or cargo and a piece of a hull from a Portuguese slave ship that sank off the coast of South Africa in 1794, taking 212 of the 500 slaves shackled on board to their deaths. The curators say that, even when depicting the worst oppression, they have tried to emphasize individual stories of the people who suffered.

The Observer view on the EU referendum campaign

Voters have bigger concerns that are not being addressed by mainstream politicians

Observer, editorial, Sunday 28 February 2016

One week into the European referendum campaign and it is already clear on which terrain the Remain versus Leave battle will be fought: jobs, growth and security. Over the coming weeks, we can expect both sides to continue to wheel out statistics, business supporters and security experts, all deployed to prove that only by remaining in/leaving the EU (delete as appropriate) will Britain thrive. It's a confusing time for would-be voters.

Before the war of words becomes deafening, it is worth reflecting on how we got so close to the EU's never before used departure lounge. David Cameron promised the referendum in last year's Conservative manifesto, partly to mollify his party's Eurosceptic wing, but, more importantly, to try to neuter the Ukip threat.

In the run-up to the general election, a major source of support for Ukip came from those Conservative and Labour voters who felt left behind by a new world of internationalised free trade. These voters have seen jobs, and sometimes whole industries, lost to globalisation and offshoring; low-skill wages depressed by immigration from the rest of Europe; and their communities undergo radical social and cultural change. Boston in Lincolnshire saw its foreign-born population increase from 3% in 2001 to 15% in 2011, mostly as a result of immigration from eastern Europe. Ukip articulated a narrative that addressed these concerns in a way that other parties didn't, even if it failed to offer any real solutions to the uneven and sometimes unfair impact of a new economic order.

This popular support for Ukip has developed against a wider backdrop of voter disenchantment with mainstream politics across Europe and the US, producing outcomes that have surprised seasoned political pundits. Two years ago, few predicted the scale of the desertion of Scottish Labour for the SNP. In the US, Donald Trump looks set to become the Republican presidential nominee and Bernie Sanders is mounting a serious challenge to Hillary Clinton. Last week's Irish general election shows a rise in support for smaller parties; there has been a growth in support for anti-austerity populist parties across Europe such as Podemos and Syriza; and the far-right Front National won almost 7 million votes in French regional elections last year.

The people rejecting mainstream politics are from different demographic groups, with sometimes very different concerns. Trump and Sanders draw support from different groups of voters. In the UK, those who supported Ukip in 2015 were drawn at least in part from groups of people who saw themselves as disenfranchised, and, in the main, socially conservative Labour and Conservative voters. These groups might look very different to those drawn to Corbyn's new-look Labour but there is a common theme: among these groups, many feel they have been excluded from the spoils of economic growth and there is an increasing sense that established centres of power, the so-called political elites in London, Brussels, Washington etc. fail to speak up for people, communities and cities outside their field of vision.

Neither the Remain nor Leave campaigns has much to say to this group of voters who feel as if the tide has gone out on the economic good times. Remain's strategy, nicknamed Project Fear by the other side, is focused on the economic and security risks of leaving – as expressed by the G20 summit – but it has made insufficient attempts to address the unequal impacts of globalisation and freedom of movement for different groups. Those left behind are acutely aware that certain sections of society are flourishing – and the continued fallout from the banking crisis cannot be underestimated.

As Will Hutton wrote in these pages four years ago, the banking crisis was "a classic case where all the gains were privatised and all the losses were socialised. It was the much-maligned state that had to step in and clear up the mess left behind by the private sector. The free market wasn't so free after all; in fact, it proved astonishingly expensive for the public purse. People across Europe still pay the price."

That, and the increasing concentration of wealth and the squeezing of the middle, continues to fuel popular resentment. Cameron, Alan Johnson and others need to find a way of at least acknowledging this anger. Addressing it with real solutions would be even better.

But neither do the various Leave campaigns have an answer. They have been unable to articulate what Britain outside the EU might look like and how it might address these issues. (...)

Obama Seismic Statement: Transgender Rights are Civil Rights

Underscoring a dramatic turnabout in his own personal worldview, President Obama on Friday focused the microscope of government on what has only recently emerged as a national concern: the right of Americans to bypass biology and determine their own gender.

- 5 The transgender bathroom battle heated up as Republicans in North Carolina passed a state law in March barring transgender women from using the ladies' room. But after North Carolina and the United States Department of Justice traded lawsuits this week, the fight went national on Friday, when the Department of Education and Justice Department sent what they called a "guiding" letter of transgender rights to the nation's nearly 100,000 public schools.
- 10 Tying bathroom choice to sex discrimination under the Civil Rights Act is a poignant political shot across the bow. More deeply, the Obama administration's decision to effectively tell schools that it's illegal to bar transgender people from the bathroom of their choice has started a legal battle where the Supreme Court – now ideologically split 4 to 4 – may have to arbitrate difficult questions around defining sex, gender, and identity. Critics retort: If biology can be questioned, then whither the laws of "common sense"? Why should identity
- 15 rights trump privacy rights? As conservative columnist Cal Thomas wrote this week: "Are morals and ethics now up for grabs, depending on which group makes the most noise and promises the most votes?" Yet to others, the issue is deeply symbolic of a fight for national ideals and human liberation. And by taking the bathroom issue from a constitutional arm-wrestling match with North Carolina to nearly every schoolhouse in the nation, Mr. Obama is, presidential historians say, pushing for a tipping point on a new frontier of civil rights. And as it did
- 20 during other civil rights eras, the bathroom has become the gauntlet. "There's a sense that, for Obama, one of the larger meanings of the American experience is the expansion of rights to those groups that have been excluded," says Bruce Miroff, a presidential historian at the State University of New York in Albany. "But there's also a sense of political timing here, that transgender rights are becoming ... a kind of natural follow-on to the struggle over same-sex marriage."
- 25 The letter, issued by the US Departments of Justice and Education, captures a quickening political moment, marked in part by Obama's own evolution on gender-based civil rights. Same-sex rights were hardly on Obama's agenda for his first four years. He didn't officially announce that he supported gay marriage until May 9, 2012, when he conceded that "I've been going through an evolution on this issue." He has now fully embraced it. He gave a shout-out to Seneca Falls, N.Y., the site of the first women's rights convention, in his second inaugural
- 30 address, after noting: "We, the people, declare today that the most evident of truths – that all of us are created equal – is the star that guides us still." In 2013, the Nation magazine suggested those words could amount to nothing more than "seductive rhetoric that lacks substance." As more recent administration moves prove, that's no longer the case.
- Just days ago, Obama proposed turning the iconic Stonewall Inn, the Greenwich Village bar where the gay rights
- 35 movement galvanized in 1969, into a national monument. Attorney General Loretta Lynch's statement this week to America's estimated 700,000 transgender citizens that "We see you," became the most forceful federal defense of transgender rights in US history. It also tipped states that Washington would deal forcefully with states that, in the administration's view, continue to discriminate based on outward appearance and manners.
- The move to force school districts to allow transgender students to use the bathroom of their choice was met with
- 40 fury from some on the right. Republicans have raised concerns about Obama's "imperial presidency" – his willingness to bypass Congress to take big national steps, including immigration reform, thawing relations with Cuba, pushing tough environmental regulations, and, now, putting US schools at the forefront of transgender rights.
- "I don't think the president has the authority by himself to make that decision," North Carolina Gov. Pat
- 45 McCrory told NPR Friday. He also said the framing this as a civil rights cause ignores concerns about privacy for children. "The expectation of privacy that men and women, boys and girls have in a highway rest stop, in gym, a locker room after gym, or a shower, a showering facility," he said. "There's an expectation that the only other people will be the same gender as they are and that's the way we've been doing things for a long time."
- Yet as Alvernia University historian Tim Blessing says, Obama "has a particular vision that he's going to
- 50 interpret, and there is a sizable body in the country – and I have no idea if it's a majority – whom he is accurately reflecting, and which, in a democracy, he has a right to do." If it's not a majority, it's close. According to a CNN/ORC poll out this week, 6 out of 10 Americans disapprove of laws like the one in North Carolina, which requires each citizen to use bathrooms that correspond to their gender at birth. Moreover, as recently as 2008, only eight percent of Americans were aware of transgender people around them, according to a survey done by
- 55 the Human Rights Campaign. Today, that figure stands at 35 percent.

Patrik Jonsson. *Christian Science Monitor*. May 14, 2016

Scotland's new spirit of hope is the legacy of an extraordinary campaign

By Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland, *The National*, 18 September 2015

One year ago today the people of Scotland were asked for the first time in our nation's history whether we should be an independent country. The result was not the one that myself and so many others had passionately campaigned for. Personally, the outcome was a crushing disappointment. The early hours of September 19, 2014, as Yes campaigners gathered at Our Dynamic Earth at Holyrood, will remain etched in my mind for ever.

But from that devastating low has emerged a new spirit of hope, optimism and belief that I think is the true legacy of the extraordinary referendum campaign which captivated Scotland throughout last year.

The campaign itself in the weeks and months running up to polling day was an utter revelation. People who had never before taken part in politics became engaged and enthused.

The grassroots nature of the Yes campaign, which saw public meetings and informal gatherings springing up the length and breadth of the country, developed at a pace and a scale which I think surprised even those of us involved at the heart of the movement. Never before have I felt such a buzz and energy in political debate. The whole nation was, as polling day drew nearer, like a gigantic public meeting. Shops, workplaces, pubs, restaurants and bus stops all became impromptu hustings venues as ordinary folk debated the merits of currency union, EU membership and tackling social inequalities. The heady final days of the campaign convinced me personally that the Yes side was going to win – my own perspective perhaps inevitably skewed by the fact that by that stage I was spending most of my time campaigning in Glasgow, which, as we all know now, voted for independence.

However, the legacy of those inspiring days endures. And I also think that the vast majority of people across Scotland – whether they voted Yes or No – felt empowered by the debate. We also discovered that we, as a nation, mattered. The focus of the world was, for a fleeting moment in time, locked on our small part of the planet, and I believe that the experience was a positive one, not least because of the overwhelmingly peaceful and civil nature of the debate we were able to present to the world. In short, I believe that the Yes campaign won a majority of hearts a year ago. We took support for independence from barely 30 per cent on some polls at the start of the campaign to within five points of victory.

But we did not win a majority of minds. For too many people the psychological roadblock to a Yes vote was too great, because of the fears, mainly financial and economic, that had been planted by our opponents. And that is a hard truth which everyone who believes in independence has to acknowledge.

I believe – now more than ever – that Scotland will become an independent country once again.

But we will not do so until we are able to successfully address those concerns and win a majority of hearts and minds, persuading a wide cross-section of Scottish opinion that full self-government is in this nation's best interests.

As I have made clear, the SNP's Holyrood election manifesto will lay out the possible circumstances of any future independence referendum. It is a judgment we will make carefully and which will be driven not by the interests of the SNP, but by the interests of the people of Scotland as a whole. We respect last year's result – and only the people, in democratic votes, can decide if there is to be another referendum and ultimately whether Scotland becomes independent. But the actions of an out-of-touch Tory government at Westminster, with only one MP out of 59, are only encouraging support for independence, which I warned David Cameron would happen when I met him after the UK General Election.

Two dozen opinion polls in the last year since the referendum have asked the independence question and every single one has shown the Yes vote up from last year. The Prime Minister needs to understand what is driving that mood in Scotland. It is a direct reaction to the policies of his government, its austerity agenda, its intention of dumping a new generation of nuclear weapons on the Clyde and the threat of dragging us out of Europe against our will. And fewer than one in 10 Scots believe he is delivering on "The Vow" of more powers – which even its chief architect Gordon Brown says the Tories are reneging on.

One year on from last year's historic vote, Scotland is a nation still alive with political debate – the legacy of September 18, 2014, is a nation re-energised and more confident about itself than at any time in our history.

Let me Ask America a Question.

On Saturday, April 9, Colorado had an “election” without voters. Delegates were chosen on behalf of a presidential nominee, yet the people of Colorado were not able to cast their ballots to say which nominee they preferred. A planned vote had been canceled. And one million Republicans in Colorado were sidelined.

5 In recent days, something all too predictable has happened: Politicians furiously defended the system. “These are the rules,” we were told over and over again. If the “rules” can be used to block Coloradans from voting on whether they want better trade deals, or stronger borders, or an end to special-interest vote-buying in Congress—well, that’s just the system and we should embrace it. Let me ask America a question: How has the “system” been working out for you and your family?

10 I, for one, am not interested in defending a system that for decades has served the interest of political parties at the expense of the people. Members of the club—the consultants, the pollsters, the politicians, the pundits and the special interests—grow rich and powerful while the American people grow poorer and more isolated. No one forced anyone to cancel the vote in Colorado. Political insiders made a choice to cancel it. And it was the wrong choice. Responsible leaders should be shocked by the idea that party officials can simply cancel
15 elections in America if they don’t like what the voters may decide.

The only antidote to decades of ruinous rule by a small handful of elites is a bold infusion of popular will. On every major issue affecting this country, the people are right and the governing elite are wrong. The elites are wrong on taxes, on the size of government, on trade, on immigration, on foreign policy. Why should we trust the people who have made every wrong decision to substitute their will for America’s will in this presidential
20 election?

Here, I part ways with Sen. Ted Cruz. Mr. Cruz has toured the country bragging about his voterless victory in Colorado. For a man who styles himself as a warrior against the establishment (you wouldn’t know it from his list of donors and endorsers), you’d think he would be demanding a vote for Coloradans. Instead, Mr. Cruz is celebrating their disenfranchisement. Likewise, Mr. Cruz loudly boasts every time party insiders disenfranchise
25 voters in a congressional district by appointing delegates who will vote the opposite of the expressed will of the people who live in that district. That’s because Mr. Cruz has no democratic path to the nomination. He has been mathematically eliminated by the voters.

While I am self-funding, Mr. Cruz rakes in millions from special interests. Yet despite his financial advantage, Mr. Cruz has won only three primaries outside his home state and trails me by two million votes—a gap that
30 will soon explode even wider. Mr. Cruz loses when people actually get to cast ballots. Voter disenfranchisement is not merely part of the Cruz strategy—it is the Cruz strategy. The great irony of this campaign is that the “Washington cartel” that Mr. Cruz rails against is the very group he is relying upon in his voter-nullification scheme.

My campaign strategy is to win with the voters. Ted Cruz’s campaign strategy is to win despite them.
35 What we are seeing now is not a proper use of the rules, but a flagrant abuse of the rules. Delegates are supposed to reflect the decisions of voters, but the system is being rigged by party operatives with “double-agent” delegates who reject the decision of voters. The American people can have no faith in such a system. It must be reformed.

Just as I have said that I will reform our unfair trade, immigration and economic policies that have also been
40 rigged against Americans, so too will I work closely with the chairman of the Republican National Committee and top GOP officials to reform our election policies. Together, we will restore the faith—and the franchise—of the American people. We must leave no doubt that voters, not donors, choose the nominee. How have we gotten to the point where politicians defend a rigged delegate-selection process with more passion than they have ever defended America’s borders? Perhaps it is because politicians care more about securing their private
45 club than about securing their country.

My campaign will, of course, battle for every last delegate. We will work within the system that exists now, while fighting to have it reformed in the future. But we will do it the right way. My campaign will seek maximum transparency, maximum representation and maximum voter participation. We will run a campaign based on empowering voters, not sidelining them.

50 Let us take inspiration from patriotic Colorado citizens who have banded together in protest. Let us make Colorado a rallying cry on behalf of all the forgotten people whose desperate pleas have for decades fallen on the deaf ears and closed eyes of our rulers in Washington, D.C. The political insiders have had their way for a long time. Let 2016 be remembered as the year the American people finally got theirs.

Donald J. Trump. *Wall Street Journal*. April 14, 2016.

Mr. Trump is a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination.

UK and America can be better friends than ever Mr Obama... if we LEAVE the EU

Writing exclusively in the Sun the top Tory urges voters to think big - and back a Brexit

By **BORIS JOHNSON**, The Mayor of London, *The Sun*, 22 April 2016

(...) [T]oday it is a tragedy that the European Union – that body long ago established with the high and noble motive of making another war impossible – is itself beginning to stifle democracy, in this country and around Europe.

If you include both primary and secondary legislation, the EU now generates 60 per cent of all the laws that pass through Westminster. We are giving £20bn a year, or £350m a week, to Brussels – about half of which is spent by EU bureaucrats in this country, and half we never see again.

We have lost control of our borders to Brussels; we have lost control of our trade policy; and with every year that passes we see the EU take control of more and more areas of public policy.

The European Court of Justice in Luxembourg is now taking decisions about human rights of all kinds. In their desperation to prop up the euro, the other EU countries are planning a further lunge towards a political and fiscal union.

If we stay in this system, we will find ourselves hauled inch by inch towards a federal superstate – with no proper accountability to the people. Can you name your Euro-MP? Can you say what they are doing in Strasbourg? It is a measure of the fatuity of that Euro-parliament that some of the bravest Euro-MPs, such as Sayeed Kamal and Daniel Hannan, are campaigning for Britain to leave.

This project is a million miles away from the Common Market that we signed up for in 1973.

It is deeply anti-democratic – and much as I admire the United States, and much as I respect the President, I believe he must admit that his country would not dream of embroiling itself in anything of the kind. The US guards its democracy with more hysterical jealousy than any other country on earth. It is not just that the Americans refuse to recognise the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, or that they have refused to sign up to the International Convention on the Law of the Sea. America is the only country in the world that has so far failed to sign up to the UN convention on the rights of the child, or the UN convention on the emancipation of women.

For the United States to tell us in the UK that we must surrender control of so much of our democracy – it is a breathtaking example of the principle of do-as-I-say-but-not-as-I-do. It is incoherent. It is inconsistent, and yes it is downright hypocritical. The Americans would never contemplate anything like the EU, for themselves or for their neighbours in their own hemisphere. Why should they think it right for us?

There are those who think that Britain has more “influence” within the EU than outside, and that therefore we can be of more value to Washington. That is nonsense. The UK has been outvoted 40 times in Brussels in the last 5 years, and the total bill for those defeats – in extra costs for UK government and business – is put at £2.4 bn a year. How can we have “influence” in the Brussels commission, when only 3.6 per cent of Commission officials come from this country? Can you imagine the Americans entrusting their trade negotiations to a body that comprised only 3.6% Americans? The idea is laughable. The truth is that the UK would GAIN influence outside. We would be able to speak up again in international bodies, rather than having our views represented – half-heartedly and imperfectly – by the EU.

Then there are those who say that we would be somehow more “influential” in Washington, because of our membership of the EU. Really? We have been in the EU for 43 years, and we haven’t even been able to do a free trade deal with the US.

And then there are the defeatists who say that yes, the EU is anti-democratic, but that we are too small and frail to survive on our own. I really don’t know what country they are talking about. The Britain I see is the fifth biggest economy on earth, a world leader in all kinds of 21 century sectors, with a capital city that is in many ways the capital of the world.

I think it is time to channel the spirit of the early Obama, and believe in Britain again. Can we take back control of our borders and our money and our system of government? Yes we can. Can we stand on our own two feet? Yes we can. Can we build a new and prosperous relationship with the rest of the EU, based on free trade and intergovernmental cooperation? Yes we can. Can we speak up for the hundreds of millions around the continent who also feel estranged from the Brussels project?

Can we once again be the champions of democracy? Yes we can. And by doing all those we can thrive as never before – and therefore be even better and more valuable allies of the United States.

Nicola Sturgeon: UK living on "borrowed time"

Nicola Sturgeon will warn today that the UK is living on "borrowed time" in a speech to mark the first anniversary of the independence referendum.

Tom Peterkin & Scott McNab, *The Scotsman*, Friday 18 September 2015

The First Minister will accuse the UK government of treating the Scottish people with arrogance and "disrespect", exactly a year after Scotland voted No. Her warning comes as David Cameron urges the SNP to "move on" from its battle for independence and to respect the outcome of the 2014 referendum.

- 5 The First Minister and the Prime Minister clashed amid signs that independence supporters are agitating for a second vote in the next few years – despite the SNP's previous assertions that it would be a "once in a generation" event.

Speaking at an event in Edinburgh, Ms Sturgeon will accuse the UK government of "failing to fully deliver" on a vow to deliver more powers, made in the dying days of last year's campaign. She will attack the Conservatives for imposing austerity on working people and the disabled as well as "arrogantly pressing ahead" with plans to renew Trident. "My message to David Cameron today is the same as it was when I met him just after the general election," Ms Sturgeon will say. "What happens to support for independence in the months and years to come will depend as much on what you do as it will on what we do. And, right now, you are living on borrowed time. If you continue to ignore

- 15 Scotland's voice, if you continue to disrespect the choice that people across this country made in May, then more and more people will conclude that Westminster simply can't deliver for Scotland.

"So, it is your choice, Prime Minister – but know that Scotland is watching."

Ms Sturgeon will repeat her line that it is up to the Scottish people when and if a second referendum is held, and will confirm that the SNP 2016 manifesto will set out the party's position on another poll.

- 20 "This is a judgment that we will make carefully," Ms Sturgeon will say. "It is a judgment that will be driven, not by the interests of the SNP, but by the interests of the people of Scotland as a whole. Only the people can decide if we will have another referendum. Only the people can decide when that will be. And only the people can decide if Scotland will become independent."

Talk of a second referendum dominated First Minister's Questions yesterday. At Holyrood, Ms

- 25 Sturgeon claimed that opponents of another independence poll "fear the verdict of the Scottish people". She told MSPs that support for Scotland leaving the UK has been rising since last year's poll, which saw Yes Scotland defeated by 55 per cent to 45 per cent. "There have been 24 polls in the last 12 months – every single one of them has shown support for independence higher than it was a year ago," she said. "We're starting to see that the desperation of the Better Together parties to have a referendum ruled out indefinitely is not because they respect democracy – it is because on this issue they increasingly fear democracy. If the Tories, if Labour, if the Liberals really believed in their heart of hearts that the people of Scotland were totally against independence, they would be crying out for another referendum."

- 30 Yesterday the Green Party released a statement saying it believes there should be another poll "in time". Regarding the precise timing, the Greens said they would respect citizen-led initiatives such as a call for a referendum signed by up to one million people on the electoral register. With that in mind, the Greens are launching a crowdfunding appeal to commission research into setting up a new Scottish currency conducted by Ronald MacDonald, research professor in macroeconomics and international finance at Glasgow University. The new research is supported by the former Yes Scotland chair
- 40 Dennis Canavan. With former First Minister Alex Salmond's plan for a currency union with the rest of the UK being seen as a fatal flaw in the independence campaign, Mr Canavan has acknowledged that Yes supporters have to "get their act together" on the economics of independence.

- 45 But in a statement released by Mr Cameron to mark today's milestone, the Prime Minister said the people of Scotland had voted "decisively" to remain in the UK. "One year ago Scotland's majority spoke. More Scots voted to keep our kingdom united than have ever voted for any party in any election in Scottish history," Mr Cameron said. "They voted decisively for a powerful Scottish parliament within a strong and secure United Kingdom. We listened. So let me be crystal clear: Scottish devolution is woven into the very fabric of our United Kingdom. (...)

The Coming Conservative Collapse

The big political story of 2015 was the rise of Donald Trump. In addition to generating endless cycles of entertainment and outrage, the Trump juggernaut crystallized a decade-long development: the fracturing of American conservatism. The first hints of the crackup appeared in 2005, when the base rose up in opposition to President George W. Bush's proposed immigration reforms. It reappeared in 2009 with the tea party, but that movement was so quickly co-opted by the GOP that its significance was muddled. (Remember that in 2010 Sens. Rand Paul, Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz were all tea party candidates.)

When the tea party fizzled, something far more populist – and far less conservative – took its place: the Trump faction. Trump supporters – and we should focus on his supporters, as Trump is not a politician but a grievance avatar – are at war with both the conservative movement and the Republican Party, trying to displace the first and overtake the second. The war they have launched against these political establishments is causing both to splinter, a disintegration that mirrors the breakup of the liberal establishment in the late 1960s.

From the 1930s through the 1960s, liberalism was the center of gravity in American politics, commanding so much institutional and electoral strength that both parties bent to its will. What ended that era of liberal consensus was not an assault from the right but from the left. Support for black civil rights fractured the Democratic coalition; the rise of student radicalism and Black Power shattered the liberal consensus. Presidential elections punctuated this unraveling, providing a series of quadrennial set-pieces charting liberalism's collapse. In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson won in a historic landslide against conservative challenger Barry Goldwater, leaving the Republicans only the Deep South and Goldwater's home state of Arizona. Four years later, Johnson faced such serious opposition from peace candidates in his own party that he declined to run for re-election. And four years after that George McGovern, hero of the New Left, was routed by President Richard Nixon, picking up just 17 of 538 electoral votes.

Conservatives may not have caused the disintegration of liberalism, but they certainly benefited from it. Refashioning themselves as the voice of the silent majority, conservatives condemned '60s radicals for a long list of offenses. The New Left was crass and vulgar, lawless and antidemocratic. They were children of privilege who were committed to the idea that America was essentially bad.

Sound familiar? It should. Though they hold a very different set of beliefs about the world, Trump supporters (and the man they back) exhibit these same characteristics. Trump presents America as washed-up. His closing statement at the most recent Republican debate included the lines: "Our country doesn't win anymore" and "Nothing works in our country." He swears a blue streak on the campaign trail and social media, and seems a bit cool on due process and constitutionalism. His supporters, privileged yet failing, are in search of a man on horseback.

Where conservatives in the late 1960s and 1970s appealed to a silent majority, Trump supporters sense they are in the minority, so their politics are edged with nihilism. (Hence their support for a candidate without any sort of coherent agenda.) Where construction workers in the 1970s hoisted signs reading "We support Nixon and Agnew" and "God Bless the Establishment," Trump supporters treat "the establishment" as the filthiest phrase in the English language. No longer believing the establishment is on their side, no longer believing victory is in reach, Trump supporters have committed themselves to '60s-style political radicalism.

In 1968, a group known as the Yippies (members of the Youth International Party) nominated a dark-horse candidate at the Democratic National Convention: Pegasus, a 150-pound Hampshire pig. As the Los Angeles Times reported, "The stated purpose of the Yippies is to make the Democratic convention look ridiculous." It was a goal the Democrats were doing a fairly good job of achieving on their own, but the Yippies helped drive the point home. Perhaps this is the best way to understand the link between '60s radicalism, conservatism, and Trump. Donald Trump is the populist right's Pegasus, only one with a better shot at the nomination – and a better shot of hastening the coming conservative collapse.

Nicole Hemmer. *US News and World Report*. Dec. 29, 2015

The Conservatives have become the party of equality

We have already persuaded big employers to make job applications name-blind. Now universities will do the same

By David Cameron, *The Guardian*, "Comment is free", 26 October 2015

At the Conservative party conference two weeks ago, I spoke about a young black woman who had to put a more white-sounding name on her CV before she started getting called for interviews. Such racism in 21st-century Britain, I said, was a disgrace, and I committed our party to ending discrimination and finishing the fight for real equality. The audience rose to their feet. It was a significant moment. And it provoked three reactions.

The first was: "What on earth are the Tories doing speaking about equality? It's not their issue." To this I say "nonsense". We're not just the party of the first Jewish prime minister and the first female prime minister; we're the party that introduced the Disability Discrimination Act, legalised gay marriage and reduced stop-and-search, and that today will start forcing companies to publish the gap between men and women's pay, and making police record Islamophobia as a separate hate crime.

I accept that we haven't always got this 100% right. No party ever has. And, because of our belief in equality of opportunity, as opposed to equality of outcome, for too long we have thought the only barrier to success was a lack of a decent education. Of course, that's the most important thing – and it's why school reform has been at the heart of our plan in government.

But we need to sweep away the other things holding people back, not least discrimination. You can give someone all the opportunities in the world – a brilliant school, first-class training, decent jobs – but it's no good if they're prevented from getting on because of their gender, race, religion, sexuality or disability. Getting this right is a natural and logical next step for a modern, compassionate Conservative party that wants to extend social mobility.

The second reaction was: "All right then, the Tories get this, but the only thing you can do is pass laws, and where are your proposals?" Of course, laws are important, like ours on disability discrimination and equal marriage. And we should recognise that the Race Relations Acts of 1965 and 1976, or the Equal Pay Act from 1970 didn't just outlaw discrimination, they also helped to change attitudes and shift public opinion.

But for all the legislation we have passed, discrimination still persists. It's no longer signs on doors that say "no blacks allowed"; it's quieter and more subtle discrimination. It's the disappointment of not getting your first choice of university place; it's being passed over for promotion and not knowing why; it's organisations that recruit in their own image and aren't confident enough to do something different, like employing a disabled person or a young black man or woman. In my opinion, you won't change these attitudes simply through more laws, but in smarter, more innovative ways.

The third reaction was: "Right, if you mean this, when and how will you show us how?" We have managed to get some of the biggest graduate employers to pledge to anonymise their job applications – in other words, make them name-blind. That means those assessing applications will not be able to see the person's name, so the ethnic or religious background it might imply cannot influence their prospects.

The civil service, BBC, NHS, local government, HSBC, Deloitte, KPMG, Virgin Money, learndirect – all these and more will now recruit people solely on merit. The Conservative party HQ will do it too. Taken together, these organisations employ 1.8 million people.

And we'll go further. Some research has shown that top universities make offers to 55% of white applicants, but only to 23% of black ones. The reasons are complex, but unconscious bias is clearly a risk. So we have agreed with UCAS that it will make its applications name-blind, too, from 2017.

Britain has come so far, but the long march to an equal society isn't over. Today's announcement is not the only thing we can do, but it's a milestone. And it means that a young black woman knows she'll get a fair shot when she applies for the job of her dreams.

It's not just Trump: Latinos Should Boycott the Republican Party en Masse

There is nothing courageous about a political party standing big to undocumented people, arguably the most vulnerable and exploited people in America. There is nothing strong about separating families or outright head-hunting undocumented individuals, as Donald Trump and Ben Carson have advocated as part of their official platforms. There is nothing noble about energizing a Republican base with anti-immigrant slurs like 'anchor babies' and 'illegals'. And so there's no other choice for us Latinos: we must boycott the Republican party en masse.

If this suggestion sounds extreme, it might be because that's how far right the Republican conversation has gone. On Tuesday night, Trump had his security physically remove Jorge Ramos, a celebrated Univision newsman largely considered the Walter Cronkite of the Spanish-speaking world, from his press conference in Iowa. Trump repeatedly tried to dodge Ramos' questions, telling him to "sit down" before shouting at him: "Go back to Univision." Trump then nodded to a security guard off to his left and Ramos was removed shortly thereafter.

As the #blacklivesmatter movement has shown, it is still a radical idea in America today for a black or brown person to maintain their own dignity in a climate where many would rather have them deported, incarcerated, or killed. For many Latinos – a group whose primary voting concern isn't even about undocumented immigration – these attacks feel very personal.

When I hear Ben Carson openly advocate for the use of drone strikes on human beings at the US-Mexico border, I hear a man saying that he'd rather bomb my family (who hails from Texas) than shake our hands. When I hear Donald Trump, the leading Republican Party candidate, speak about a border fence, I hear a man saying he wishes I didn't exist at all in this American fabric.

This is the scary part: those ideas are the exact racist, xenophobic things Republican supporters, and the candidates themselves, are explicitly saying at rallies across the country. At Donald Trump's rally in Alabama this past Friday, supporters yelled openly about "white power" as Trump spoke out against undocumented immigrants. Trump supporter Jim Sherotta later told reporters at AL.com that he would like to create a vacation spot on the US-Mexico border that would charge a \$25 permit and reward \$50 for every confirmed kill.

Even more worrisome is the way the vocabulary of this rhetoric is coded, as Los Angeles Times journalist Jose Antonio Vargas has noted extensively. "Illegal" and "Mexican" have come to be used interchangeably by both Republican supporters and the candidates themselves. This should set off alarm bells in the minds of Latino voters and Americans everywhere. The Republican Party is not designed to include people like us. And it's quickly becoming a promoter of and platform for white supremacist, hate group rhetoric.

Despite what Republicans promise, there is no way they can fight the demographics. In California today, 51% of all people under 25 are Latino. One out of six newlyweds (including myself) are part of an interracial union. Asians and Pacific Islanders are the fastest-growing immigrant group in the United States. The America of tomorrow will look vastly different than the imaginary America that Republicans are so eager to preserve. And while this might cause concern for some Americans, the news is actually pretty exciting. The consumer activity of documented and undocumented immigrants in the economy actually produces new jobs at a higher rate. And as a White House study has shown, this kind of economic activity is projected to increase the American GDP by 0.4-0.9% over a 10-year period.

The Republican rhetoric surrounding undocumented immigration is not only racist. It is also, statistically speaking, wrong. And not just a little wrong, but really, really wrong. So, let's call this what it is: an ad hominem attack on all Latinos. Those of us who are or aren't products of undocumented immigration, those of us whose families have inhabited the American Southwest, and the rest of this continent known simply as "America", for longer than any white man can claim. America was a brown country before it was anything else. We're still here. We still fight. We still, and will, vote. This is our country, and we can bring the Republican Party to its knees.

Daniel Peña. *The Guardian*. 26 August 2015.

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The Queen and a reign of abject failure

Joan Smith, "Opinion", *The Guardian*, 20 April 2016

(...) [T]he modern monarchy is very different from its Tudor counterpart. After more than six decades on the throne, the Queen has come to occupy a special role in the national psyche, if such a thing exists. She has come to represent continuity at a moment when the world seems more dangerous than ever.

- § These days she is a grandmotherly figure, and it is regarded as churlish to ask questions about how she has conducted herself as head of state. I am a republican, and I don't believe in the monarchy but if you strip away the stardust, as royalists like to call it, it is hard to see her reign as a resounding success even on its own terms. Her personal popularity has fluctuated wildly: in the autumn of 1997, after the death of Princess Diana, the *Daily Mail* published a memorable front page, demanding: Time for the
10 Queen to go? At that low point, an opinion poll suggested that "7 in 10 Britons" wanted her to consider abdicating.

- The monarchy's foundations are less secure than is often assumed, which is why royalists should be worried that the Queen will leave behind an institution as unreformed as it is undemocratic. There is a chasm between the UK's constitutional arrangements and its commitment to equality: viewed from
15 abroad, the royals are a strange bunch of people with little connection to the diverse country the family is supposed to represent on the world stage. Its inextricable connection to the archaic principle of primogeniture means that the next three heads of state will be stolidly monocultural: white, male and Anglican.

- For the second time in less than a century, the throne is about to pass to someone entirely unsuited to
20 it.

- More to the point, the royal family has entrenched its position in a way that flies in the face of the dramatic changes other elements of the establishment have had to cope with in recent years. As elected politicians learn to exist in a much more open and critical society – the prime minister, chancellor and leader of the opposition have just published details of their tax affairs – the Queen and her immediate
25 relatives are less open than ever to democratic scrutiny.

- Senior royals now enjoy total exemption from the Freedom of Information Act. Press releases crowing about how little the monarchy costs leave out the huge cost of security, even though taxpayers fund it. The office of an elected head of state would be cheaper to run – it is preposterous that there are something like 18 "working" royals on the public payroll. But that isn't even the most significant
30 objection to the monarchy's opaque finances. The royals' habitual secrecy makes a mockery of the accountability we expect of people who receive public money.

- Their exemption from freedom of information requests came about because they had a moment of staring into the abyss, caused by the *Guardian's* attempt to see some of the "black spider" memos from the Prince of Wales to politicians. The fact that he privately bombarded ministers with letters,
35 contrary to his constitutional position, was an open secret but the government fought to keep the details under wraps. Understandably, because the man they eventually revealed is a nightmare: credulous, reactionary and gripped by the illusion that he is a radical thinker. In 2004 he wrote to the then education secretary, fishing for public funds for one of his pet projects that would challenge "fashionable" ideas about education. "Perhaps I am now too dangerous to associate with!" he boasted.

- 40 Dangerous, yes, but not in the way he intended. From a variety of sources, we know that Prince Charles has character flaws that imperil the future of the entire operation. For the second time in less than a century, the throne is about to pass to someone entirely unsuited to it. If you are a monarchist, this is surely one of the Queen's greatest failures: she was in charge of the prince's education and upbringing, yet she has been singularly ineffectual as a brake on his excesses.

- 45 What makes this so astonishing is that the Queen has more reason than anyone to be aware of the historical precedent. She was nine in 1936 when her uncle David, another manifestly unsuitable Prince of Wales, succeeded his father George V and lasted less than a year as Edward VIII. That near-disaster for the monarchy has always cheered republicans, and the parallels between then and now are striking. Edward was in his early 40s when he inherited the throne but Charles is approaching 70 and likely to
50 be a king in a hurry. He has let it be known that he does not intend to stop making what he calls "heartfelt interventions" – otherwise known as unconstitutional political interference – in national life. For republicans, the prospect of this foolish, not-very-bright man ascending the throne is a dream come true. The present Queen's legacy may look very different once the future of the monarchy is in the inept hands of her eldest son.

The knowledge economy is a myth. We don't need more universities to feed it

Most new jobs do not require degree-level qualifications. Encouraging more young people to graduate will create only debt and disappointment

Andre Spicer, *The Guardian*, 18 May 2016

Governments around the world believe that to remain competitive in a global economy they must become smarter. In an attempt to boost its knowledge intensiveness, the UK government has just launched a plan to overhaul the university sector. It aims to transform universities by creating many more of them. The hope is that this will increase the number of people with degrees, and the UK will be a more competitive economy.

The idea of the knowledge economy is appealing. The only problem is it is largely a myth. Developed western economies such as the UK and the US are not brimming with jobs that require degree-level qualifications. For every job as a skilled computer programmer, there are three jobs flipping burgers. The fastest-growing jobs are low-skilled repetitive ones in the service sector. One-third of the US labour market is made up of three types of work: office and administrative support, sales and food preparation.

The majority of jobs being created today do not require degree-level qualifications. In the US in 2010, 20% of jobs required a bachelor's degree, 43% required a high-school education, and 26% did not even require that. Meanwhile, 40% of young people study for degrees. This means over half the people gaining degrees today will find themselves working in jobs that don't require one.

This bleak picture could get worse. There has been a decline in demand for knowledge-intensive workers requiring a degree since 2000. Over 47% of existing jobs are under threat of being automated. The occupations most likely to be automated out of existence are knowledge-intensive ones such as auditor, insurance underwriter and credit analyst. Those least at risk of automation are hands-on jobs such as masseuse and fire fighter.

The stark mismatch between the number of people with degrees and the number of jobs requiring degrees has created a generation of bored employees who feel like they are working "bullshit jobs". It's no surprise 37% of UK employees think their jobs make no meaningful contribution to the world at all.

As people with degree-level education take lower-skilled jobs, the less educated are pushed further down the labour market. In some cases they are pushed out altogether. Often their only route back in is an expensive degree that will enable them to get a job that actually only requires a high-school level education to do. We might think that as the cost of higher education goes up, people will be put off studying. Not the case. Higher education is a luxury good: as the price goes up, demand does not decline. Two US economists found that as prices went up for university degrees, there was only a very small fall in demand. According to some calculations, the cost of a degree in the US has gone up 500% since 1985. Over the same timeframe, demand has continued to rise rapidly.

The huge increase in demand for education coupled with large price hikes has created massive income streams for universities. Most of this income has not gone towards teaching, research or engaging the wider public. Instead it has been spent on expanding administration. In the UK, more than two-thirds of universities now have more administrators than they do faculty members. Today, universities routinely invest in attractive buildings, launch impressive brand-building campaigns, employ armies of professional managers and create excellent gym and spa facilities. Meanwhile faculty staff report feeling like they are "being asked to do more with less".

It's uncertain whether universities are delivering on their core purpose. One recent study tracked thousands of students during their time at university. It uncovered a rather disturbing picture: after two years at university, 45% of the students showed no significant improvement in their cognitive skills. After four years, 36% of students had not improved in their ability to think and analyse problems. In some courses – such as business administration – students' cognitive abilities actually declined in the first few years.

Expanding universities and encouraging increasing numbers of young people to study for degrees may not be the smartest thing to do. It means educating more people who aren't that interested, for jobs that don't exist, in a way that has little impact on their intellectual ability. These students will emerge from their few years of education saddled with tens of thousands of pounds of debt. Many will not be able to pay it off and that debt will become the responsibility of the taxpayer. The government's plan of opening even more universities and offering ever more degrees could easily make matters worse. Attempts to create an intelligent economy could end up being a rather stupid idea.

I've got a northern accent but I'm not working class. So what am I?

Rebecca Hardy, "Opinion", *The Guardian*, 23 May 2016

What makes someone middle class? There are the usual clichéd signifiers: wearing Boden clothes, shopping at Waitrose, Mandarin classes for the kiddies. None of these things mean anything to me, but I still count myself as middle class. And yet I have a Lancashire accent and say class with a short "a" (/æ/) and not "clars".

5 I mention this as there seems to be a presumption that being northern means you are automatically working class. We saw it in Maxine Peake's recent revelation that she couldn't play a barrister, according to the BBC, because of her flat vowels. "Martha's been to university," they reportedly told her. "She's educated." Meanwhile teachers with funny voices like mine are being encouraged to ditch their regional accents, to – and I quote – "adopt a more middle-class one", a common conflation that is
10 still largely left unchallenged.

Aspiring Manchester mayor Andy Burnham hasn't helped matters either, with his stereotype-appeasing comments last week. "It's harder growing up in the north-west," he said. "If you say you want to be a doctor, lawyer or MP you get the mickey taken out of you." This is news to me. I went to the local comp but my best friend wanted to be an international lawyer, and I can't remember anyone
15 teasing her for this. Old classmates include a dentist, a doctor and an architect, and they still go down ginnels and eat barm cakes.

It's preposterous, really. Does anyone really think there aren't lawyers, doctors and university professors from Manchester, Leeds and Carlisle who speak with northern vowels? Why would a Boltonian sound like they are from Basingstoke?

20 I'll leave aside the fact that education is supposed to open up minds and challenge stereotypes, rather than enforce them, and focus instead on the sense of displacement this leaves you with. Because if I am not middle class, then what am I? The working class wouldn't have me. At a school quiz, my children were asked, "What cake do you eat at Christmas?", and they all answered, "Panettone". I meditate, only when I chant "om shanti", I say it with a Ramsbottom accent.

25 There must be millions of us – the strangely classless – all walking around with our daft dialects and John Lewis bags, our National Trust cards and gardening clogs, wondering where exactly our place is in British society now that our voices have been deemed not middle-class enough. Which, really, of course, means: not standardised south-east.

I noticed the same linguistic prejudice when Victoria Wood died, with all the heartfelt eulogies that
30 presumed she was working class. I'm a huge Victoria Wood fan, but, as a Bury girl myself, I have a strong inkling that she wasn't – from the fact that she went to the fee-paying, private grammar school where my mother taught. I saw her some years ago in Marks & Spencer in Muswell Hill, but even before she hit north London, I suspect her upbringing was hardly like Kes.

And here's the thing: every native in the north speaks with a northern accent, like people from Spain
35 sound Spanish. There might be degrees of strength, but everyone, from the headteacher to the cleaner, speaks with northern vowels. You don't hear "parth" or "larf" except from the mouths of southerners.

Is it impossible to accept that someone can have a northern accent and still be a member of the chattering classes? Alan Bennett, William Hague – and yes, Victoria Wood. Surely it's not a shock to grasp that they were hardly from down t' pit. It's depressing, really, that something as obvious as this
40 has to be said. It's the linguistic equivalent of politely reminding people that not everyone oop north wears a flat cap, keeps a whippet and has bread and butter with everything.

I could point out that these prejudices exist because of the lack of diversity in the national media, which Victoria Wood was brilliant at ribbing: ("We'd like to apologise to viewers in the north – it must be awful for you.") Chip on my shoulder? Maybe, but at least, as Stuart Maconie says, "It's a
45 decent chip with gravy and mushy peas."

The EU isn't just about business. That's why I think Scotland will vote to stay

My hope is that the rest of the UK will agree that solidarity, social protection and mutual support are just as important as the economic arguments

By Nicola Sturgeon, *The Guardian*, 29 February 2016

The people of Scotland, along with the rest of the UK, will soon decide whether the UK should remain a member of the European Union. The Scottish government believes that continued EU membership is in the best interests of Scotland. We would much prefer Scotland to be one of the independent member states of the EU – and hope that in future we will be. However, whether independent or part of the UK, we believe that we are better off in than out. As such, the Scottish government will make a positive and constructive case for remaining in the EU. I believe that we benefit from being part of the EU, and the EU benefits from having us a part of it.

For more than 40 years, membership of the EU has been good for the prosperity and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities across the country. Just look at some of the social protections the EU has established: the right not to be discriminated against on the basis of age, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation, race or ethnicity; maternity and parental leave entitlement; the right to paid holidays; the right to work for no more than 48 hours each week – all of these are enshrined in EU law.

These social benefits need to be articulated just as strongly as the economic benefits of membership. But the economic benefits matter too. As part of the EU, UK firms have the huge advantage of being able to work in the world's largest trading area of 500 million consumers. For Scotland, this is crucial, as the EU is our top overseas exports destination: 42% of our exports outside the UK in 2014 – worth more than £11bn – were sold into the EU market. Membership of the single market also helps to support more than 300,000 jobs in Scotland.

Having access to the European single market has removed barriers to trade and gives freedom to move capital, people, goods and services – but the EU is not simply an economic union, it is so much more than that. Being part of the EU is also about solidarity, social protection and mutual support. This has become even more evident in the recent months, with members of the EU working collectively on pressing global challenges, such as the movement of refugees and migrants, energy security and climate change. By working together within the EU, we can achieve far more and make a real difference to some of the world's most vulnerable people.

While it's clear that being a member of the EU has its benefits, within any institution improvements can be made. If we are to influence positive change in Europe, we must remain within it – only that guarantees our role in the EU decision-making processes on issues that affect our everyday lives. Right now, as a member of the EU, the UK sits at the top table in Brussels, with the opportunity to shape EU policy and make a positive contribution to Europe. As Norway's former foreign minister Espen Barth Eide has said, as a member of the European Economic Area as opposed to the EU, Norway makes a substantial contribution to the EU budget, but has no vote and no presence when crucial decisions that affect the daily lives of its citizens are made.

Two weeks ago, as European leaders were forced to break off from discussing the refugee crisis in order to negotiate the taper rate at which the UK can cut benefits for working EU citizens, I can't have been the only person wondering whether the UK's standing in the world was really being enhanced by that process. In the weeks ahead, both sides of the debate must aspire to higher ideals.

A concern for Scotland is the prospect of voting to stay in but being taken out of the EU on the strength of a UK-wide vote. I have repeatedly made it clear that such a scenario would, in my view, lead to strong demands for a second independence referendum. Indeed, I have met people who voted no in September 2014 who say they would vote yes in such circumstances. However, I have also been clear that this is not a scenario I want to see unfold. A UK vote to leave the EU is not the circumstance in which I would choose to fight a second independence referendum – but as first minister I would have a duty to listen to the demands for such a vote.

While I take nothing for granted, I believe that in June people in Scotland will demonstrate their support for remaining in the EU. My hope is that the rest of the UK will share that commitment. Because if it does, it will be good for Scotland, good for the UK and good for Europe.

Here's an inspiring view of Britishness to defeat the Brexiters

In our nation's finest moments, we were outward looking and engaged with the world. This can be our future

By Gordon Brown, *The Guardian*, 10 May 2016

Any spectator could be forgiven for thinking two European referendums were under way: the first, a vote on our economy, the second, on our way of life. Until now, the focus of the Remain camp has been trade, jobs and prosperity, while the Leave appeal has been to the heart – promising to restore British sovereignty and protect our borders.

5 But years of political experience make it impossible to forget that economic and cultural concerns are for ever in tandem – the two are inextricably linked – and that in the final countdown to 23 June leave will have to answer searching questions on the economy, while remain will relish explaining how Britain's strong sense of national identity is enhanced – not undermined – by engagement in Europe.

10 The Brexit camp conjures up the Britain of 1940 – standing alone, a race apart, an island that has always been sufficient unto itself. Wave after crushing wave of globalisation, it says, reinforces its demand to bring control back home.

15 But there is another, more resonant view of Britishness that confronts the Ukip-inspired culture war head on. It sees Britain's finest hour and the Dunkirk spirit in a different light: of a people who would not stand aside when Europe was in mortal danger and who, as defenders of liberty, intervened time and again to make sure tyranny never triumphed. It is the Britain that has always been outward-looking, and engaged with the world – the Britain of traders, missionaries and explorers, who were never insular or isolationist. Only when Britain's very existence came under attack did the English Channel ever become Shakespeare's "moat defensive". For most of our island history, the Channel and North Sea have been our highways to the world.

20 This vision of a global Britain is now best seen through the eyes of young people – who see no alternative, economically and culturally, to a future in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world.

25 While globalisation reawakens in individuals a need to belong, it also creates a need for nations to cooperate. And so the way forward for Britain – and every other nation – lies in balancing the national autonomy we desire with the continental cooperation we require. This should lead us to reject the two absolutes that continue to confuse rather than illuminate the debate: a European superstate, which would undermine national identities; and a return to a 19th-century view of sovereignty, when even the world's largest superpower recognised that sovereignty had to be shared. Put simply, the future lies not in a United States of Europe but in a United Europe of States.

30 Take the economy. Over a decade ago I opposed Britain joining the euro – Europe's most ambitious integrationist project – but I have always favoured opening up the European single market. This will, as it expands into digital and financial services, be the biggest British job creator of the next decade.

Inside the European Union, Britain has the power to decide our energy balance between nuclear, coal, oil and renewables. However, an energy and environmental union not only prevents free-riders from polluting our air, but also integrates our massive yet intermittent wind and wave power into the widest possible energy pool.

35 We do not need to sacrifice our political and social culture to benefit from these dividends. Nor do we need to sacrifice our national autonomy – parliament continues to determine our own social security policies – as we help workers secure basic rights by setting the same minimum standards in all 28 member countries. Only the most exploitative employer benefits if the good-paying employer, and country, is undercut by the bad, and the bad by the worst, in what is a race to the bottom.

40 Getting the balance between autonomy and cooperation is also vital when it comes to perhaps the most controversial issue of the moment – rooting out tax havens that deprive our public services of critically needed resources and prevent us having a tax system that people see as fair. The UK parliament retains its freedom to make its own decisions on taxation, with VAT alone subject to European bands. But if we are to ensure no hiding places for tax evaders, no safe haven for tax avoiders and no treasure islands for the money launderers, who hide an estimated \$7.5 trillion of global wealth, we need the automatic exchange of tax information worldwide.

45 In addition to a comprehensive European blacklist of tax havens as the first step to a global blacklist, we should agree that British overseas territories and crown dependencies that fail to comply cannot be excluded from the blacklist; and the UK should now require them to have public registers of beneficial owners.

50 Britain cannot achieve this on its own. And with America currently resisting reciprocal tax arrangements, collective action by all 28 countries of the European Union to blacklist avoiders, impose sanctions and even levy withholding taxes – on our own overseas territories, if necessary – is currently the one game in town.

(...)

Jeremy Corbyn's victory has already transformed politics

Seamus Milne, "Comment is Free", *The Guardian*, 16 September 2015

(...) Corbyn's election and the movement that delivered it represent a political eruption of historic proportions. Whatever now happens, such a fundamental shift cannot simply be reversed. Eight years after economic crisis took hold of the western world, the anti-austerity revolt has found its voice in Britain in an entirely unexpected way. The political conformity entrenched during the years of unchallenged neoliberalism has been broken.

For the first time in decades, an unapologetic socialist is at the head of one of Britain's two main parties. Meanwhile the Tory government is launching a legal assault on trade unions – on the right to strike, Labour's funding and trade unionists' civil liberties – that has been branded as Franco-ite by the Conservative MP David Davis. It's an attack that is clearly aimed at destroying the labour movement as an effective political and industrial force.

The idea that this represents Tory colonisation of the "centre ground" is evidently absurd. Instead, politics is polarising in response to over a decade of falling living standards, rising insecurity and economic crisis. The media and political establishment has proved incapable of managing the intrusion of Corbyn's democratic insurgency into what had seemed a well-insulated elite order. Media organisations that have for years called every major issue wrongly, from the war on terror to the economy, find themselves unable to deal with a movement that has overturned the rules of the game.

So instead they have seized on every mistake or gaffe, real or imagined, in step with the defeated Labour right, to try to derail the nascent Corbyn leadership. Those include everything from the lack of women in the traditionally most senior jobs – in the first cabinet or shadow cabinet ever to have a majority of women – to failing to sing the national anthem and leaving a broadcast media vacuum for opponents to fill.

The Labour leader has managed to see off the immediate threat by constructing a broad-based shadow cabinet that was widely predicted to be an impossibility. And the success of his crowdsourced debut at prime minister's questions on Wednesday disarmed Cameron and stabilised, at least in the short term, a restive parliamentary party.

It's scarcely surprising if the early days of Corbyn's leadership have been chaotic. This is a spontaneous campaign that erupted out of nowhere, powered by grassroots volunteers across the country. The idea that it has been in the grip of a trade union machine is laughable to anyone who has seen it up close. Corbyn himself has no experience of such a leadership role and is inevitably on a steep learning curve.

But his evident lack of spin and professional political chicanery is of course part of his appeal. Corbyn's most serious challenge, aside from a frenetically hostile media, will come from his own MPs. After years of New Labour control, the parliamentary Labour party was far to the right of the membership even before the influx of new recruits. Disinherited Blairites are already plotting to bring him down or, if they fail, in some cases to defect to the Conservatives.

Others can be expected to vote with the government, for example to authorise bombing Syria, against the new Labour leadership. New shadow cabinet members are already speaking out against the platform Corbyn was elected on, from his opposition to welfare cuts to his refusal to hand Cameron a blank cheque on EU membership renegotiation. Some of that can be swallowed as a new way of doing politics, so long as it doesn't sink into incoherence.

But it also reflects an elemental clash between MPs, many of whom made it to Westminster courtesy of a centralised vetting operation, and a vastly expanded membership who want to take control of their own party. By giving rein to Labour's democracy, the new leadership has the chance to change the balance of power. It will certainly be a rough ride. The media onslaught will continue. But if Corbyn's supporters keep their heads, last Saturday can be the start of more far-reaching change: to break open the political system, put the alternative to austerity centre stage, and bring an end to Britain's support for endless war.

To do that will need a powerful movement outside as well as inside parliament. The post-2008 reaction against austerity is now taking place in one country after another. The challenge is to translate that insurgency into political power. We don't know how far Corbyn's election can take Labour, or how long his leadership can survive. But one thing is clear: there will be no going back. It has already changed Labour, and British politics, for good.

Sarah Palin, the political mother of Trump

By Dana Milbank Opinion writer May 11 *The Washington Post*

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/sarah-palin-the-political-mother-of-trump/2016/05/11/bdbedc32-17bb-11e6-aa55-670cabef46e0_story.html

“I know Russia well. I had a major event in Russia two or three years ago, Miss Universe contest.” — Donald Trump

“You can actually see Russia from land here in Alaska.” — Sarah Palin

Mark Salter, the longtime John McCain *consigliere*, was just asked by Politico’s Glenn Thrush whether he believed McCain’s choice of Sarah Palin as his 2008 running mate “opened the door a crack for a Trump-style candidate.”

“Maybe a little,” Salter said after a pause.

Stuff and nonsense. Salter was being modest. Palin’s nomination didn’t crack the door for Trump. It birthed him. Palin is, politically, the Mother of Trump.

Some of their similarities, such as their curious ways of justifying their knowledge of Russia, are superficial. Trump, asked by NBC’s Chuck Todd where he gets his military advice, said: “Well, I watch the shows. . . . You know, when you watch your show and all of the other shows.” This had more than an echo of Palin’s reply to Katie Couric in 2008 about which newspapers or magazines she reads: “Um, all of them, any of them that have been in front of me all these years.”

But the likenesses go much deeper, between the candidates themselves and among the followers they’ve inspired: The attacks on the media. The demonization of a supposed “establishment.” The huge and sometimes violent crowds. The prominent platforms given both candidates by Fox News. The racist responses among supporters. The paranoia about taking away guns. The suspicion of science. The scapegoating of Muslims. The portrayal of President Obama as something other than American.

Well before Trump built his national political reputation by questioning the authenticity of Obama’s birth certificate, there was Palin. In December 2009, she called it a “fair question” and “fair game” and said “the public rightfully is still making it an issue.” In 2011, after Trump said he was sending investigators to Hawaii to probe Obama’s birth, Palin responded, “More power to him.”

Before Trump said he would bring back waterboarding and “a hell of a lot worse,” there was Palin. Two years ago, she talked about how “if I were in charge, they would know that waterboarding is how we baptize terrorists.”

Before there was Trump talking about banning Muslim immigration (a stance Palin supports) and forced registration of Muslims, there was Palin. “Let Allah sort it out,” was her 2013 response to the Syrian civil war.

Soon after Palin was named McCain’s running mate in 2008, I went to see her campaign in Florida in front of 8,000 people — and as I reread my column from then it sounds much like the Trump events I’ve seen this year. She justified her accusation that Obama “pals around with terrorists” by saying that Obama isn’t “a man who sees America the way you and I see America” and that he “sees America as imperfect enough to work with a former domestic terrorist who had targeted his own country.”

When she railed against this “domestic terrorist,” Bill Ayers, one man in the audience shouted, “Kill him!”

She stirred the crowd to turn against the press in a manner similar to Trump’s rallying of supporters against penned-in reporters at his events: “Palin supporters turned on reporters in the press area, waving thunder sticks and shouting abuse. Others hurled obscenities at a camera crew. One Palin supporter shouted a racial epithet at an African American sound man for a network and told him, ‘Sit down, boy.’”

Back then, she stirred racial animosity (she tried to make an issue of Obama’s former preacher, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, even though McCain had called that off-limits) and quarreled with the party establishment (the Florida GOP chairman was forbidden aboard her plane because he questioned Palin’s abilities).

Nicolle Wallace, a former top official on the McCain 2008 campaign, observed the parallel in the *New York Times* in January after Palin endorsed Trump: “Mr. Trump is riding the wave of anxiety that Ms. Palin first gave voice to as Senator John McCain’s running mate. Mr. Trump has now usurped and vastly expanded upon Ms. Palin’s constituency, but the connection between the two movements is undeniable.”

McCain, admirably, refused to let the rage take over his campaign in 2008: He famously corrected the woman at his event who called Obama an “Arab,” taking a different approach than Trump, who let stand an accusation at his event that Obama is a Muslim.

But now there is no such filter. And the man who gave us Palin in 2008 worries that her political progeny could cost him his Senate seat in Arizona this year. With Trump on the ticket, McCain has said, “this may be the race of my life.”

The Poisoning of Flint

By Katrina vanden Heuvel January 19, *The Washington Post*, Opinion

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-poisoning-of-flint/2016/01/19/5462112c-be02-11e5-9443-7074c3645405_story.html

In early 2015, shortly after his victory in a heated reelection contest, Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder (R) began exploring a run for president. With his business experience and electoral success in a blue state, Snyder was considered a viable potential candidate, so he embarked on a national speaking tour and set up a fundraising organization. Its name: "Making Government Accountable."

As Snyder was testing the presidential waters, however, his government was being shamefully unaccountable to constituents who were concerned about their water supply. The city of Flint switched its primary water source from Lake Huron, through Detroit's system, to the Flint River in April 2014. Approved by an emergency manager appointed by the governor, the move was supposed to save the beleaguered city millions of dollars. But residents soon began reporting tap water that appeared discolored, smelled rotten and caused kids to break out in rashes. Today, Flint has become a nightmarish example of how misguided austerity policies can literally poison the public.

Editor and publisher of the *Nation* magazine, vanden Heuvel writes a weekly column for *The Post*.

We now know that Flint's water supply was contaminated by lead that it collected from deteriorating pipes. In recent weeks, Snyder has issued a public apology to the city, declared a state of emergency, activated the National Guard and requested assistance from President Obama, who declared the situation a federal emergency on Saturday. The state health department is also looking into whether an outbreak of Legionnaires' disease that has killed 10 people in the area is connected to the water crisis. Meanwhile, the Justice Department is investigating the state and local government's actions, while it could cost up to \$1.5 billion to fix the city's water distribution system.

All of this is the result of the Snyder administration's stunning lack of accountability, beginning with the fateful decision to put Flint under the control of a political appointee who was unelected and unaccountable to the public. When the city's residents initially reported their concerns in 2014, officials responded by pumping hazardous levels of chlorine into the water. When complaints persisted, officials assured citizens that the water was safe to drink, repeatedly disregarding clear evidence that it wasn't. But when elevated levels of lead showed up in children's blood this past fall, the government was forced to admit there was a problem. Snyder appointed a task force to investigate the crisis, which found, among other things, that legitimate fears were met with "aggressive dismissal, belittlement, and attempts to discredit" the individuals speaking out.

"They cut every corner," said Flint resident Melissa Mays. "They did more to cover up than actually fix it. That's criminal." Snyder's then chief of staff, Dennis Much more, acknowledged the administration's deplorable response in a July 2015 email, writing: "These folks are scared and worried about the health impacts and they are basically getting blown off by us (as a state we're just not sympathizing with their plight)."

But the water crisis in Flint represents more than a catastrophic political failure. It is also a direct consequence of decades of policies based on the premise that government spending is always a problem and never a solution. Long before Flint tried to reduce spending by moving to a cheaper water source, the pipes that ultimately poisoned the water were neglected. Across the country, crumbling infrastructure is a pervasive threat that is creating serious issues in other cities and could produce similar crises. As Michigan State University economist Eric Scorsone explained, "Flint is an extreme case, but nationally, there's been a lack of investment in water infrastructure. This is a common problem nationally — infrastructure maintenance has not kept up."

Unfortunately, the biggest obstacles to desperately needed public investments are politicians like Snyder who conflate "accountability" with austerity. For Republican technocrats in particular, more accountability almost always means less spending on government programs that help ensure the public good.

With less than a month until the Iowa caucus, the conventional wisdom is that voters are fed up and that their anger is reflected in the polls. That frustration and distrust of government is understandable when politicians like Snyder and their cronies are so blatantly unaccountable to the public. Indeed, when government is polluted by officials who put corporate interests above their constituents and cost-cutting above the common good, it too often fails to fulfill even its most basic functions, such as protecting access to safe drinking water. But instead of giving in to anger and austerity, in this election, we should be having a vigorous debate about how government can be truly accountable to the people it serves.

On Guns, Clinton Runs Both Left and Right, Depending on Her Audience

JOHN R. LOTT JR. April 25, 2016 *National Review*

<http://www.nationalreview.com/article/434523/hillary-clinton-gun-control-new-york-pro-second-amendment-elsewhere>

What does Hillary Clinton really believe on guns? This year, she is running to the left of Bernie Sanders.

5 In 2008, she ran well to the right of Obama, arguing against any kind of federal “blanket rules.”

On Wednesday, Hillary Clinton gave an address at Philadelphia’s St. Paul’s Baptist Church. With a nod to Pennsylvania’s high rate of gun ownership, she declared: “There is a Second Amendment, there are constitutional rights. We aren’t interested in taking away guns of lawful, responsible gun owners.”

10 But in New York City in the fall, she told donors: “The Supreme Court is wrong on the Second Amendment, and I am going to make that case every chance that I get.” In Maryland last Thursday, Chelsea Clinton reiterated that point, promising that her mom would appoint to the Supreme Court justices who would overturn past decisions that struck down local and state gun-control measures. Given that the only laws that the Supreme Court has objected to are complete gun bans or laws that made it a crime to chamber a bullet, one wonders what “constitutional rights” Clinton was talking about preserving

15 in Philadelphia. Clinton has shown this split personality on guns at other points in the campaign. In the month leading up to the New Hampshire primary, gun control was the focus of a quarter of her campaign ads there. By contrast, she ran not a single gun-control ad in rural areas of Iowa. In Iowa as a whole, only 6 percent of her ads discussed guns in any way.

When asked last October about gun laws in the U.K. and Australia, Clinton responded by extolling their virtues. She spoke highly of the U.K.’s handgun ban and of Australia’s confiscation of a third of legally owned guns. She failed to note that the U.K.’s homicide rate soared by 50 percent in the eight years after the handgun ban took full effect in 1997. The rate later fell, but only after an 18 percent increase in the number of police. Clinton pointed out that Australia’s homicide rate fell in the wake of confiscation.

20 What she neglected to note is that the rate had been falling even faster in the twelve years before confiscation. Senator Bernie Sanders often defends his positions on guns by arguing that what makes sense for one part of the country might not make sense for another, such as his home state of Vermont. Clinton has gone so far as to suggest that his argument is racist: “There are some who say that [gun violence] is an urban problem. Sometimes what they mean by that is: It’s a black problem. But it’s not. It’s not black, it’s not urban. It’s a deep, profound challenge to who we are.” Clinton is being

25 hypocritical. She made Sanders’s exact argument in April 2008, when she was running against Obama in Pennsylvania: “What might work in New York City is certainly not going to work in Montana,” she said. “So for the federal government to be having any kind of, you know, blanket rules that they’re going to try to impose, I think doesn’t make sense.”

On Wednesday, Clinton repeated the false statistic that gun violence claims the lives of “33,000 people a year” in the United States. In fact, in 2014 there were 21,334 firearm suicides, 586 accidental gun deaths, and 8,214 gun murders. Clinton gets to 33,000 by adding to the statistics above roughly 3,000 justifiable homicides by police and civilians. Also, note that 71 percent of these 30,134 deaths are suicides. Given that Clinton supports assisted-suicide laws, it is a little strange that she lumps together suicides with murders. Research continually shows that banning guns won’t prevent suicides — there are simply too

30 many easy ways to kill oneself. In Japan, which has a suicide rate 54 percent higher than the U.S. rate, many people commit suicide by stepping in front of trains.

Americans use guns to stop violent crime about four times as often as they use guns to commit crime. Banning handguns primarily disarms the good, law-abiding citizens who would otherwise be able to make crime more difficult for criminals. In every place for which data are available, gun bans have been

35 followed by an increase in murder rates. Clinton keeps pushing laws that do little but disarm law-abiding citizens, especially minorities and the poor. In some places, expanding background checks to private transfers will add at least \$125 to the cost of obtaining a gun. Who will be stopped by such costs? America’s poorest and most vulnerable individuals.

It must be confusing to run to the right on guns in one election and to the left in the next. But a little

40 hypocrisy is understandable when you are more intent on scoring political points than on being accurate. John Lott is the president of the Crime Prevention Research Center and the author of *More Guns, Less Crime*.

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G.O.P. Has Only Itself to Blame

The Opinion Pages | Op-Ed Columnist Charles M. Blow MAY 9, 2016

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/09/opinion/gop-has-only-itself-to-blame.html>

- * The Republican Party is trapped between a rock and huckster.
- 5 Now that all of their other presidential candidates have dropped out of the race, Donald Trump is the last demagogue standing. He is their presumptive nominee. Their party belongs to him. It's a YUUGE ... disaster. Now the few remaining serious folks in that party have to make a decision: support this man who, if current trends in polling hold, is likely to lose the general election by an overwhelming margin (and likely do even more damage to the party brand and hurt the chances of down-ballot candidates), or they can ... wait, they don't really
- 10 have another option other than to sit out this cycle and pretend that their party hasn't gone stark raving mad. The House speaker, Paul Ryan, told CNN last week that he is "just not ready" to support Trump. Jeb Bush posted on Facebook, "I will not vote for Donald Trump." His brother and father are both refusing to endorse Trump.
- Mitt Romney, the Republicans' last presidential nominee, has also said that he won't support Trump.
- 15 Lindsey Graham said last week that he "cannot in good conscience" support Trump. Many prominent Republicans have also indicated that they will skip the party's convention. CNN reported last week that Erick Erickson, a conservative blogger, radio host and leader of the #NeverTrump movement, has "had a number of conversations about laying the groundwork for a third-party candidate to oppose Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in the general election."
- 20 "If the delegates ratify this madness in Cleveland, many of us will look elsewhere for a credible candidate to oppose both Trump and Clinton," Erickson told CNN. If you didn't already believe that whoever wins the Democratic nomination would be a huge favorite to win in November, a third-party conservative candidate would seal the deal. But please, shed not a single tear for this conservative calamity. They brought it on themselves. They allowed
- 25 their unhinged contempt for — and in some cases, even hatred of — Obama drive them insane, into the arms of a walking absurdity who catered to their rage. Now, that man — simultaneously an unbelievable joke and an undeniable threat — is on the verge of ripping the party, and indeed the country, apart (even as he insists that he's "very much a unifier"). It's not that Trump's chances of winning in November are particularly good. According to The Upshot, "If
- 30 today's general election polling holds true, Hillary Clinton will easily defeat Donald Trump." The Los Angeles Times put it in even starker terms: "To reach the 270 electoral votes it takes, the businessman and reality TV star will have to carry a number of states that have not voted Republican in well over a generation, while prevailing in several battlegrounds where, polls show, he starts behind." No, the threat is not that he will necessarily win, but that he will further poison our national dialogue in the six
- 35 months between now and Election Day, and the off chance that maybe, just maybe, a September surprise could turn his sliver of a chance into an actual victory. This what-if, worst-case possibility that America might do the unimaginable — and elect Trump to our highest office — is severely unsettling. Even the president, speaking of Trump at a press conference on Friday, had to impress upon everyone how
- 40 serious it is that the country is flirting with disaster: "I just want to emphasize the degree to which we are in serious times and this is a really serious job. This is not entertainment. This is not a reality show. This is a contest for the presidency of the United States." Sure, there are some prominent Republicans tucking their tails, biting their tongues and swallowing hard as they begrudgingly announce their support for the presumptive Republican nominee.
- 45 But they no doubt see what the Pew Research Center reported last month: "Unfavorable opinions of the G.O.P. are now as high as at any point since 1992." They know that Trump will send that number sinking, as if tied to a brick. Trump has used a toxic mix of bullying and bluster, xenophobia and nationalism, misogyny and racism, to appeal to the darker nature of the Republican Party and secure his place as the unlikeliest presidential nominee in recent
- 50 American history. That paved his path, coupled with what Jim Clifton, chairman and C.E.O. at Gallup, called earlier this year "a staggering" three-fourths of Americans believing "corruption is 'widespread' in the U.S. government." As Clifton emphasized: "Not incompetence, but corruption." There is real pain in America, and where you sit along the ideological spectrum dictates whom you see as your
- 55 Satan and whom as your savior. It appears that enough Republican voters have opted for the combo package, for which the party is likely to pay a hefty price. Congratulations, Republicans, you've hitched yourselves to the madman-driven carriage, and it's heading for the cliff.

The Sexual Politics of 2016

David Brooks MARCH 29, 2016 *The Opinion Pages* | Op-Ed Columnist *The New York Times*

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/29/opinion/the-sexual-politics-of-2016.html>

- In the middle of the Civil War a colonel named Robert McAllister from the 11th Regiment of New Jersey tried to improve the moral fiber of his men. A Presbyterian railroad contractor in private life, he lobbied and preached against profanity, drinking, prostitution and gambling. Some of the line officers in the regiment, from less genteel backgrounds, rebelled. They formed an organization called the Independent Order of Trumps. In sort of a mischievous, laddie way, the Trumps championed boozing and whoring, cursing and card-playing.
- 10 In her book "The Gentlemen and the Roughs," Lorien Foote notes that this wasn't just a battle over pleasure. It was a contest between two different ideals of masculinity. McAllister's was based on gentlemanly chivalry and self-restraint. Trumpian masculinity was based on physical domination and sexual conquest. "Perceptions of manliness were deeply intertwined with perceptions of social status," Foote writes. And so it is today.
- 15 These days we're living through another great redefinition of masculinity. Today, both men and women are called upon to live up to the traditional ideals of both genders. So the ideal man, at least in polite society, gracefully achieves a series of balances. He is steady and strong, but also verbal and vulnerable. He is emotionally open and willing to cry, but also restrained and resilient. He is physical, and also intellectual. Today's ideal man honors the women in his life in whatever they want to do. He treats them with respect in the workplace and romance in the bedroom. He is successful in the competitive world of the marketplace but enthusiastic in the kitchen and gentle during kids' bath time.
- 20 This new masculine ideal is an unalloyed improvement on all the earlier masculine ideals. It's a great achievement of our culture. But it is demanding and involves reconciling a difficult series of tensions. And it has sparked a bad-boy protest movement and counterculture, currently led by a group we might once again call the Independent Order of Trumps.
- Donald Trump's presidential campaign is a revolution in manners, a rejection of the civility codes of the educated class. As part of this, he rejects the new and balanced masculine/feminine ideal that has emerged over the past generation. Trump embraces a masculine identity — old in some ways, new in others — built upon unvarnished misogyny.
- 30 Trump's misogyny is not the historical moralistic misogyny. Traditional misogyny blames women for the lustful, licentious and powerful urges that men sometimes feel in their presence. In this misogyny, women are the powerful, disgusting corrupters — the vixens, sirens and monsters. This gynophobic misogyny demands that women be surrounded with taboos and purgation rituals, along with severe restrictions on behavior and dress.
- 35 Trump's misogyny, on the other hand, has a commercial flavor. The central arena of life is male competition. Women are objects men use to win points in that competition. The purpose of a woman's body is to reflect status on a man. One way to emasculate a rival man is to insult or conquer his woman. Writing for Slate, Frank Foer has one of the best (and most disgusting) compilations of Donald Trump's history with women. Most of the episodes are pure dominance display.
- 40 For example, A. J. Benza was a writer who confessed that his girlfriend had left him for Trump. Trump called into a radio show he was appearing on to brag: "I've been successful with your girlfriend, I'll tell you that," Trump said. "While you were getting onto the plane to go to California thinking she was your girlfriend, she was some place that you wouldn't have been very happy with." When the commentator Tucker Carlson criticized him, Trump left voice mail bragging about how much more sex he gets. He told an interviewer that you have to treat women like dirt.
- 45 It's not quite right to say that Trump is a throwback to midcentury sexism. At least in those days negative behavior toward women and family members was restrained by the chivalry code. Political candidates didn't go attacking their rivals' wives based on their looks. Trump's objectification is uncontrolled. It's pure ego competition with a pornogrified flavor.
- 50 In this way, Trump represents the spread of something brutal. He takes economic anxiety and turns it into sexual hostility. He effectively tells men: You may be struggling, but at least you're better than women, Mexicans and Muslims. I've grappled with determining how much to blame Trump's supporters for his rise. Many of them are victims of economic dislocation and it is hard to fault them for seeking a change, of course, even if it is simplistic and ignorant.
- 55 But in the realm of cultural politics, Trump voters do need to be held to account. They are participating in a descent into darkness. They are supporting a degrading wrong. This is the world your daughters are going to grow up in.

A Confession of Liberal Intolerance

Nicholas Kristof MAY 7, 2016 *Sunday Review* | Op-Ed Columnist

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/08/opinion/sunday/a-confession-of-liberal-intolerance.html>

- WE progressives believe in diversity, and we want women, blacks, Latinos, gays and Muslims at the table — er, so long as they aren't conservatives.
- Universities are the bedrock of progressive values, but the one kind of diversity that universities disregard is ideological and religious. We're fine with people who don't look like us, as long as they think like us. O.K., that's a little harsh. But consider George Yancey, a sociologist who is black and evangelical. "Outside of academia I faced more problems as a black," he told me. "But inside academia I face more problems as a Christian, and it is not even close."
- I've been thinking about this because on Facebook recently I wondered aloud whether universities stigmatize conservatives and undermine intellectual diversity. The scornful reaction from my fellow liberals proved the point. "Much of the 'conservative' worldview consists of ideas that are known empirically to be false," said Carmi. "The truth has a liberal slant," wrote Michelle.
- "Why stop there?" asked Steven. "How about we make faculties more diverse by hiring idiots?"
- To me, the conversation illuminated primarily liberal arrogance — the implication that conservatives don't have anything significant to add to the discussion. My Facebook followers have incredible compassion for war victims in South Sudan, for kids who have been trafficked, even for abused chickens, but no obvious empathy for conservative scholars facing discrimination.
- The stakes involve not just fairness to conservatives or evangelical Christians, not just whether progressives will be true to their own values, not just the benefits that come from diversity (and diversity of thought is arguably among the most important kinds), but also the quality of education itself. When perspectives are unrepresented in discussions, when some kinds of thinkers aren't at the table, classrooms become echo chambers rather than sounding boards — and we all lose.
- Four studies found that the proportion of professors in the humanities who are Republicans ranges between 6 and 11 percent, and in the social sciences between 7 and 9 percent.
- Conservatives can be spotted in the sciences and in economics, but they are virtually an endangered species in fields like anthropology, sociology, history and literature. One study found that only 2 percent of English professors are Republicans (although a large share are independents).
- In contrast, some 18 percent of social scientists say they are Marxist. So it's easier to find a Marxist in some disciplines than a Republican.
- The scarcity of conservatives seems driven in part by discrimination. One peer-reviewed study found that one-third of social psychologists admitted that if choosing between two equally qualified job candidates, they would be inclined to discriminate against the more conservative candidate.
- Yancey, the black sociologist, who now teaches at the University of North Texas, conducted a survey in which up to 30 percent of academics said that they would be less likely to support a job seeker if they knew that the person was a Republican.
- The discrimination becomes worse if the applicant is an evangelical Christian. According to Yancey's study, 59 percent of anthropologists and 53 percent of English professors would be less likely to hire someone they found out was an evangelical.
- "Of course there are biases against evangelicals on campuses," notes Jonathan L. Walton, the Plummer Professor of Christian Morals at Harvard. Walton, a black evangelical, adds that the condescension toward evangelicals echoes the patronizing attitude toward racial minorities: "The same arguments I hear people make about evangelicals sound so familiar to the ways people often describe folk of color, i.e. politically unsophisticated, lacking education, angry, bitter, emotional, poor."
- A study published in *The American Journal of Political Science* underscored how powerful political bias can be. In an experiment, Democrats and Republicans were asked to choose a scholarship winner from among (fictitious) finalists, with the experiment tweaked so that applicants sometimes included the president of the Democratic or Republican club, while varying the credentials and race of each. Four-fifths of Democrats and Republicans alike chose a student of their own party to win a scholarship, and discrimination against people of the other party was much greater than discrimination based on race.
- "I am the equivalent of someone who was gay in Mississippi in 1950," a conservative professor is quoted as saying in "Passing on the Right," a new book about right-wing faculty members by Jon A. Shields and Joshua M. Dunn Sr. That's a metaphor that conservative scholars often use, with talk of remaining in the closet early in one's career and then "coming out" after receiving tenure.
- This bias on campuses creates liberal privilege. A friend is studying for the Law School Admission Test, and the test preparation company she is using offers test-takers a tip: Reading comprehension questions will typically have a liberal slant and a liberal answer.
- Some liberals think that right-wingers self-select away from academic paths in part because they are money-grubbers who prefer more lucrative professions. But that doesn't explain why there are conservative math professors but not many right-wing anthropologists. (...)

Hillary Clinton Faces Challenge: Black Voters in Rust Belt

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS March 18, 2016, *The New York Times*

http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2016/03/18/us/politics/ap-us-dem-2016-black-voters-north-vs-south.html?_r=0

- MILWAUKEE — This month has brought a new challenge for Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign: Black voters in Rust Belt states aren't as solidly behind her as they've been in the South. It led to the Democratic front-runner's surprise loss in Michigan, where about a third of black voters supported Bernie Sanders, and it nearly cost her Missouri, where African-Americans voted more like their counterparts across the Midwest than in the South. Now it could foreshadow vulnerability for Clinton in Wisconsin, the next Northern battleground primary.
- 10 What's behind the trend? Exit polls conducted for The Associated Press and television networks by Edison Research reveal a possible answer: Black voters up North have appeared more likely than black voters down South to say race relations in the U.S. have recently gotten worse. And while large majorities of African-Americans in both regions trust Clinton to handle the issue, those in the Midwest have been much more likely to say they trust Sanders.
- 15 Rust Belt blacks live closer to some of the major racial conflicts of recent years — the police killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri; the police shooting death of 12-year-old Tamir Rice in Cleveland, Ohio; and the tainted water crisis in heavily black Flint, Michigan. And they are well positioned to turn out and express their dismay at the polls.
- "Absolutely, there are enough to make a difference," said Bradley Thurman, 66, an African-American cafe owner in Milwaukee, noting that black support twice helped tip Wisconsin toward Barack Obama, even as many other races in the state have gone in favor of Republicans.
- 20 Down South, Clinton has routinely picked up support from 8 in 10 black voters or more. But in areas farther north across the Midwest where manufacturing has contracted and factories have closed, support has been as low as Missouri's 67 percent. That primary election had been too close to call until Sanders conceded Thursday, giving Clinton a 1,531-vote win.
- About 7 in 10 black voters backed Clinton in Ohio and Illinois, less than in the South but not enough of a drop to deny her those states on a day when she also picked up victories in Florida and North Carolina. The tight vote in Missouri — a swing state where residents have long debated whether they're Midwestern or Southern — underscored feelings that could help keep Sanders afloat.
- 30 "I didn't like the statement Clinton made calling our kids 'super predators,'" said Syreeta Myers, 42, who is black. Myers' only child, VonDerrit Myers, was killed in St. Louis in 2014 by a white police officer, two months after Brown was fatally shot in nearby Ferguson. She's been politically active ever since, attending rallies and marches. Myers said most of the people she knows are behind Sanders because of "what he said about stopping police from killing our children."
- 35 Marquette University senior Nick Truog also sees race relations as an area where Sanders has an edge. "I saw online where someone said, 'I can't vote for Dr. King, so I'm going to vote for the guy who marched with him,'" said Truog, whose father is black and mother is white. Truog studies international affairs and political science in Milwaukee, a city that saw months of protests over the death of Dontre Hamilton, a black man killed by a white police officer in 2014. He said he backs Sanders, citing the candidate's positions on income inequality and student debt as factors.
- 40 But Bobby Sanford, 42, who runs a small Milwaukee-area pest control business, doesn't like Sanders' idea of free college. "No," Sanford said. "We have to pay for that." Sanford, who is a black independent, remains undecided. "Honestly, I just don't like Clinton," he said. He said he's a fan of Republican front-runner Donald Trump's outspoken style but doesn't admire Trump enough to vote for him.
- 45 "I don't think so, but I don't want to vote for Sanders, either," Sanford said. "I pay enough in taxes as it is." Similar dissatisfaction with the government comes up in Michigan. Exit poll figures show black voters there were somewhat less likely than those in Southern states where the question was posed to have positive feelings about the way the government is working.
- This also could hurt Clinton, who's seen as the establishment candidate. The data show that black support at the high levels Clinton has seen in the South probably would have flipped Michigan into the win column and added breathing room for her in Missouri.
- 50 Overall, about 45 percent of whites have supported Clinton in the Midwest, making the minority vote a decisive factor. Black voters make up a smaller percentage of the Wisconsin Democratic electorate than other Rust Belt states. In 2008, about 8 percent of Wisconsin Democratic primary voters were black. By comparison, African-Americans made up about 21 percent of Democratic primary voters in both Michigan and Missouri this year.
- 55 Still, Thurman, owner of Coffee Makes You Black, a well-known breakfast spot on Milwaukee's predominantly African-American north side, thinks it's enough. He supports Sanders because of the Vermont independent's bold proposals. "It's a lot of pie in the sky, but at least he's throwing it out there," Thurman said. His wife looked surprised when she heard his position. "We don't really discuss politics," said Laurie Thurman, who co-owns the shop. She's leaning toward Clinton because "she's been around." (...)

Why Won't Hollywood Cast Asian Actors?

By KEITH CHOW APRIL 22, 2016 [The Opinion Pages](#) | Op-Ed Contributor *The New York Times*

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/23/opinion/why-wont-hollywood-cast-asian-actors.html>

HERE'S an understatement: It isn't easy being an Asian-American actor in Hollywood. Despite some progress made on the small screen — thanks, “Fresh Off the Boat”! — a majority of roles that are offered to Asian-Americans are limited to stereotypes that wouldn't look out of place in an '80s John Hughes comedy.

This problem is even worse when roles that originated as Asian characters end up going to white actors. Unfortunately, these casting decisions are not a relic of Hollywood's past, like Mickey Rooney's portrayal of I. Y. Yunioshi in “Breakfast at Tiffany's,” but continue right up to the present.

Last week Disney and Marvel Studios released the trailer for “Doctor Strange,” an adaptation of the Marvel comic. After exhausting every “white man finds enlightenment in the Orient” trope in less than two minutes, the trailer presents Tilda Swinton as the Ancient One, a Tibetan male mystic in the comics. Though her casting was no secret, there was something unsettling about the sight of Ms. Swinton's clean-shaven head and “mystical” Asian garments. It recalled jarring memories of David Carradine from “Kung Fu,” the 1970s television series that, coincidentally, was itself a whitewashed version of a Bruce Lee concept.

A few days later, DreamWorks and Paramount provided a glimpse of Scarlett Johansson as the cyborg Motoko Kusanagi in their adaptation of the Japanese anime classic “Ghost in the Shell.” The image coincided with reports that producers considered using digital tools to make Ms. Johansson look more Asian — basically, yellowface for the digital age.

This one-two punch of white actors playing Asian characters showed how invisible Asian-Americans continue to be in Hollywood. (Not to be left out of the whitewashing news, Lionsgate also revealed the first images of Elizabeth Banks as Rita Repulsa, another originally Asian character, in its gritty “Power Rangers” reboot.)

Why is the erasure of Asians still an acceptable practice in Hollywood? It's not that people don't notice: Just last year, Emma Stone played a Chinese-Hawaiian character named Allison Ng in Cameron Crowe's critically

derided “Aloha.” While that film incited similar outrage (and tepid box office interest), no national conversation about racist casting policies took place.

Obviously, Asian-Americans are not the only victims of Hollywood's continuing penchant for whitewashing. Films like “Pan” and “The Lone Ranger” featured white actors playing Native Americans, while “Gods of Egypt” and “Exodus: Gods and Kings” continue the long tradition of Caucasians playing Egyptians.

In all these cases, the filmmakers fall back on the same tired arguments. Often, they insist that movies with minorities in lead roles are gambles. When doing press for “Exodus,” the director Ridley Scott said: “I can't mount a film of this budget” and announce that “my lead actor is Mohammad so-and-so from such-and-such.”

When the screenwriter Max Landis took to YouTube to explain the “Ghost in the Shell” casting, he used a similar argument. “There are no A-list female Asian celebrities right now on an international level,” he said,

admonishing viewers for “not understanding how the industry works.”

Mr. Landis's argument closely tracks a statement by the screenwriter Aaron Sorkin. In a leaked email exchange with studio heads, he complained about the difficulty of adapting “Flash Boys,” Michael Lewis's book about the Wall Street executive Bradley Katsuyama, because “there aren't any Asian movie stars.”

Hollywood seems untroubled by these arguments. It's not about race, they say; the only color they see is green: The reason Asian-American actors are not cast to front these films is because not any of them have a box office track record.

But they're wrong. If minorities are box office risks, what accounts for the success of the “Fast and Furious” franchise, which presented a broadly diverse team, behind and in front of the camera? Over seven movies it has grossed nearly \$4 billion worldwide. In fact, a recent study by the Ralph J. Bunche Center for African

American Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, found that films with diverse leads not only resulted in higher box office numbers but also higher returns of investment for studios and producers.

And Hollywood's argument is circular: If Asian-Americans — and other minority actors more broadly — are not even allowed to *be* in a movie, how can they build the necessary box office clout in the first place? To make matters worse, instead of trying to use their lofty positions in the industry to push for change,

Hollywood players like Mr. Landis and Mr. Sorkin take the easy, cynical path.

Even a modest hit like the “Harold and Kumar” trilogy, starring John Cho and Kal Penn, was able to quadruple its production budget after box office and home media sales. Meanwhile, films with white stars fail at the box office all the time. Chris Hemsworth, who stars in this weekend's “Huntsman” sequel, has had many more box office flops than successes, yet he is considered a bankable movie star.

Such facts reveal Hollywood's dirty little secret. Economics has nothing to do with racist casting policies. Films in which the leads have been whitewashed have all failed mightily at the box office. Inserting white leads had no demonstrable effect on the numbers. So why is that still conventional thinking in Hollywood?

For years, audiences have essentially boycotted these films, yet studios keep making them. Let's hope Hollywood eventually listens.

Flint Isn't the Only Place With Racism in the Water

Environmental racism is an issue of political power: Polluters and waste sites are placed where politicians expect little or no political backlash. By Tracey Ross and Danyelle Solomon, February 9, 2016 *The Nation*
<http://www.thenation.com/article/flint-isnt-the-only-place-with-racism-in-the-water/>

5 Last month, Michigan Governor Rick Snyder (R) delivered his fifth State of the State address, a ceremonious speech that typically presents the governor's legislative priorities and vision for the year ahead. But instead of talking about pressing priorities—such as the need to reform the state's public education system, improve its job market, or invest in its infrastructure—Governor Snyder was forced to apologize for his government's failure to provide clean, safe water to the people of Flint, Michigan.

10 The Flint water crisis began in April 2014 with an effort to cut the budget. Government officials chose to switch water access from the clean Lake Huron to the more corrosive and polluted Flint River. As Curt Guyette, a journalist for the ACLU explained on TalkPoverty Radio, almost immediately residents began complaining of hair loss, rashes, and tap water that looked and tasted strange. Yet, despite calls from concerned residents, city and state officials assured the community that the water was fine. Former Flint mayor Dayne Walling (D) even drank the water on television to dissuade any further concerns. For months, nothing was done.

At the heart of current national outrage is the impact that tainted water will have on Flint residents—especially the city's children. A study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that even minimal lead exposure can cause cognitive and behavioral issues, including an increased propensity toward violent behavior. In fact, children with lead poisoning are seven times more likely to drop out of school and six times more likely to become
10 involved in the juvenile justice system than those not exposed to lead. Moreover, the impact of lead exposure is irreversible.

THE LONG HISTORY OF ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM

In the midst of this knowledge, it is hard to ignore the facts that 56 percent of Flint's population is African American and most of the city's residents live paycheck to paycheck. According to the 2015 Census, more than 40 percent of
15 residents are living below the federal poverty level. Once the booming Vehicle City where General Motors was born, Flint has since lost its industrial base and, with it, government investment in all forms of infrastructure. Support for the city's schools, public transportation, and employment has fallen by the wayside.

Still, how is it possible that, in 2016, low-income, black Americans are denied access to clean, safe water? Unfortunately, the roots of this injustice run deep.

0 Environmental racism is entwined with the country's industrial past. At the beginning of the 20th century, zoning ordinances emerged as a way to separate land uses in order to protect people from health hazards. Over time, however, city planning and zoning ordinances focused less on public health and more on creating idyllic communities, protecting property rights, and excluding "undesirables." In other words: The least desirable communities were reserved for discarding waste and marginalized people alike.

5 By the 1930s, federal leaders began to make large investments in creating stable, affluent, and white communities in the suburbs, while giving local governments the autonomy to neglect low-income communities and communities of color. New highways and waste facilities were constructed in marginalized communities, where they cut through businesses or homes and exposed residents to excessive pollution.

In his seminal book, *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality*, Professor Robert Bullard,
0 considered the father of environmental justice, wrote:

The problem of polluted black communities is not a new phenomenon. Historically, toxic dumping and the location of locally unwanted land uses (LULUs) have followed the "path of least resistance," meaning black and poor communities have been disproportionately burdened with these types of externalities.

Environmental racism is an issue of political power: The negative externalities of industrialization—pollution and
5 hazardous waste—are placed where politicians expect little or no political backlash.

For this reason, ZIP codes often has more of an effect on health than genetic codes. Despite legislative efforts to dismantle segregation, it remains a pernicious problem in America today. Affluent communities still adopt exclusionary zoning codes that keep less affluent households from moving in, and African American home buyers are still shown fewer homes than whites and are often steered away from predominantly white neighborhoods.

0 "African Americans, even affluent African Americans are more likely to live closer to and in communities that are more polluted than poor white families that make \$10,000 a year," according to Bullard. In essence, the nation's laws are executed mostly to protect white households and leave the rest of the country to inhale the toxic fumes of racism.

A recent study in *Environmental Research Letters* noted that the highest polluting facilities in the country are disproportionately located near communities of color. One of the most notorious examples of this disparity is Cancer

5 Alley, the 85-mile stretch between Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and New Orleans that is home to more than 150 industrial plants and refineries. The deadly corridor earned its disreputable name due to the sheer number of cancer cases, inexplicable illnesses, and deaths that have afflicted its residents. (...)

Ted Cruz's Radical New Proposal: Patrol and 'Secure' Muslim Neighborhoods

By George Zornick *Twitter* MARCH 22, 2016 *The Nation*

<http://www.thenation.com/article/ted-cruzs-radical-new-proposal-patrol-and-secure-muslim-neighborhoods/>

Within hours of the terror attacks in Brussels, Senator Ted Cruz sent out a press release that declared, "The days of the United States voluntarily surrendering to the enemy to show how progressive and enlightened we are at an end."

The Texas senator and presidential candidate called for more security on the southern border and said the United States needs to "halt the flow of refugees from countries with a significant al Qaida or ISIS presence." He also advanced a radical idea: "We need to empower law enforcement to patrol and secure Muslim neighborhoods before they become radicalized."

Cruz's campaign did not reply to immediate requests for clarification, but this proposal raises several questions: What powers would Cruz grant law enforcement that it doesn't already have? How does one identify what is, and is not, a Muslim neighborhood? What does it mean to "secure" the area? Would non-Muslims in that area also be subject to law enforcement surveillance and unspecified "securing"? How are these law-enforcement actions constitutionally permissible "before" there is any radicalization present?

Cruz has argued several cases before the Supreme Court and is frequently hailed as a "full-spectrum Constitutional conservative" on the campaign trail. At the rallies I attended in Iowa and New Hampshire, Cruz often spoke of "religious liberty" in the context of perceived attacks by the Obama administration on Christian groups in the United States, as well as on active-duty soldiers, who Cruz claimed were forbidden from praying. (They are not.)

While the details of this proposal are still unclear—I will update if the campaign responds—they rang alarm bells among constitutional experts. "Profiling people based on their religion or race is blatantly unconstitutional and violates the guarantee of religious protection and religious freedom," said Hina Shamsi, director of the ACLU's national-security project, in a phone interview.

"One way to look at it is to replace the word 'Muslim' with 'Jewish,' 'Christian,' 'African American,' or 'Latino.' What's wrong in one context is wrong in others," Shamsi added.

This new position is somewhat of a shift for Cruz: after the attacks in San Bernardino, he explicitly rejected Republican calls for more surveillance by the National Security Agency. "Hoarding tens of billions of records of ordinary citizens did not stop Fort Hood, it didn't stop Boston, it didn't stop Chattanooga, it didn't stop Garland, and it failed to detect the San Bernardino plotters," he said at the time.

Cruz later rejected Donald Trump's proposed "database" of Muslim citizens, and said, "The First Amendment protects religious liberty." Cruz has advocated for surveilling mosques, but only when there is specific evidence of a threat. "The federal government can go and apprehend us in the church and they can monitor us if we are carrying out criminal conduct," he said in December interview on SiriusXM. "And the way the Fourth Amendment works, the Bill of Rights work, is you have particularized evidence of criminal conduct and you target the terrorist and not the law-abiding citizens."

Now Cruz appears to have made a dramatic shift. Polls have consistently shown that Republican primary voters strongly support banning Muslims from entering the country, and there's an increasing beliefeven among longtime Republicans that Trump is fulfilling the desire of some voters for a "strongman." As Cruz tries desperately to win votes and deny Trump the clean majority of Republican delegates needed before the party convention, he may have calculated that doubling down on Trump's ugly, no-holds-barred approach to (ostensibly) combating terrorism will help him.

There were some recent signposts on Cruz's road to this point when he added several foreign policy advisers with extreme anti-Muslim pasts to his campaign last week. Frank Gaffney, for example, leads an organization that the Southern Policy Law Center has designated a hate group, and has pushed outlandish theories that Obama is a Muslim and that New Jersey Governor Chris Christie may be guilty of "treason" for appointing a Muslim-American judge. (When asked on CNN about Gaffney last week, Cruz said, "I recognize that folks in the media get really nervous when you actually call out radical Islamic terrorism. Frank Gaffney is someone I respect.")

Another Cruz adviser, Clare Lopez, declared in a recent radio interview that the Muslim Brotherhood has infiltrated the federal government. "Brotherhood affiliates and associates and those connected to it are the go-to advisers, if not appointees, for the top levels of national security in our government, in this administration for sure, but going back many decades, really, is the program of this Brotherhood," she claimed in remarks flagged by Right Wing Watch. She added that Senator Joseph McCarthy "was spot-on in just about everything he said about the levels of infiltration" in the 1950s, which echoes Gaffney's belief that the House Un-American Activities Committee should be reinstated.

Giving Thanks for a Nation of Migrants, Refugees, and Immigrants

John Nichols November 26, 2015, *The Nation*

<http://www.thenation.com/article/giving-thanks-for-a-nation-of-migrants-refugees-and-immigrants/>

John Nichols is the co-author, with Robert W. McClesney, of *People Get Ready: The Fight Against a Jobless Economy and a Citizenless Democracy* (Nation Books).

The Pilgrims were, of course, migrants seeking refuge from intolerance and threats, hardship and violence. It is the recollection of their experience that underpins the deeply rooted American values not just of welcoming the stranger but of respecting religious diversity.

As dissenters against the interwoven church and state of their native England, Pilgrims were hounded in their homeland. "Like others who refused to follow the Church of England's teachings, some of them were harassed, fined or even sent to jail," recall the historians of the Pilgrim experience. "When they felt they could no longer suffer these difficulties in England, they chose to flee to the Dutch Netherlands."

In time, however, economic hardship and fear of war led them to undertake a perilous Atlantic voyage to North America.

President Obama picks up the story in his 2015 Thanksgiving Proclamation:

Upon arriving in Plymouth, at the culmination of months of testing travel that resulted in death and disease, the Pilgrims continued to face great challenges. An indigenous people, the Wampanoag, helped them adjust to their new home, teaching them critical survival techniques and important crop cultivation methods. After securing a bountiful harvest, the settlers and Wampanoag joined in fellowship for a shared dinner to celebrate powerful traditions that are still observed at Thanksgiving today: lifting one another up, enjoying time with those around us, and appreciating all that we have.

In a moment of ugly politics and harsh pronouncements—especially with regard to refugees from Syria but also toward migrants and immigrants from many lands—and a harsh disregard for religious and cultural diversity, the president gently reminds Americans of their own history and recognizes that "the inherent selflessness and common goodness of the American people endures."

"In the same spirit of togetherness and thanksgiving that inspired the Pilgrims and the Wampanoag, we pay tribute to people of every background and belief who contribute in their own unique ways to our country's story," declares the president. "Each of us brings our own traditions, cultures and recipes to this quintessential American holiday—whether around dinner tables, in soup kitchens or at home cheering on our favorite sports teams—but we are all united in appreciation of the bounty of our nation. Let us express our gratitude by welcoming others to our celebrations and recognize those who volunteer today to ensure a dinner is possible for those who might have gone without. Together, we can secure our founding ideals as the birthright of all future generations of Americans."

This regard for America's diversity and its tradition of lifting one another up has been a constant in Obama's annual proclamations. The president does not use his Thanksgiving pronouncements to make bold political statements—as Lyndon Johnson did 50 years ago with his referencing of the passage of the Voting Rights Act, establishment of Medicare and Medicaid and war on poverty: "In the past year we have added greatly to that national legacy. We have guaranteed the right to vote to all our citizens. We have pledged dignity to our elderly—even in sickness. We have added new dimensions to the education of our youth. We have broadened the horizons of opportunity for our poor. And all the while, we have enjoyed the greatest prosperity in history." Nor does the current president get as specific as, for instance, Dwight Eisenhower did with his detailed endorsements of the United Nations and its programs.

But Obama still gets attacked for infusing his proclamations with "multicultural pieties."

What the critics do not get is that Thanksgiving is a holiday for "multicultural pieties"—for embracing diversity, for sharing our prosperity, for recalling the history of welcoming the stranger. And for carrying those legacies forward.

Presidents of both parties, and of many ideological traditions, have long understood this. In 2001, George W. Bush's Thanksgiving Proclamation noted, "As we recover from the terrible tragedies of September 11, Americans of every belief and heritage give thanks to God for the many blessings we enjoy as a free, faithful, and fair-minded land." That was in keeping with the former president's statements respecting religious diversity in general, his specific recognition in those difficult days of the contributions of Arab-Americans, and his declaration that "we respect the vibrant faith of Islam which inspires countless individuals to lead lives of honesty, integrity, and morality."

Forty years ago, in another trying moment for the nation, President Gerald Ford proclaimed, "Let us join in giving thanks for our cultural pluralism. Let us celebrate our diversity and the great strengths that have come from sharing our traditions, our ideas, our resources, our hopes and our dreams. Let us be grateful that for 200 years our people have been dedicated to fulfilling the democratic ideal—dedicated to securing 'liberty and justice for all.'" Ford's sometimes rival, Ronald Reagan, would use one of his Thanksgiving Proclamations to celebrate the fact that "[p]eople from every race, culture, and creed on the face of the Earth now inhabit this land. Their presence illuminates the basic yearning for freedom, peace, and prosperity that has always been the spirit of the New World." (...)

A State of the Union Embrace of American Muslims and Religious Diversity

At least 20 members of the House and Senate have invited Muslim Americans to attend the speech, as has the White House. By John Nichols *The Nation*, JANUARY 12, 2016

<http://www.thenation.com/article/a-state-of-the-union-embrace-of-american-muslims-and-religious-diversity/>

Members of Congress get a chance each year to invite a guest to attend the State of the Union address, and a number of US House members are using their invitations to make a vital point about religious pluralism. In so doing, they are focusing attention on what is likely to be a vital part of President Obama's message. Obama has spoken a great deal in recent months about the importance of what the White House refers to as "our traditions of religious inclusion, freedom and cooperation among those with different beliefs"—and he is expected to make the point again during Tuesday night's address.

Among those cheering him on will be Samba Baldeh, a City Council member from Madison, Wisconsin. An immigrant from the West African nation of The Gambia, where roughly 90 percent of the population is Muslim, Baldeh was invited to the joint session of Congress by Congressman Mark Pocan, D-Wisconsin.

"As a Muslim man and a local elected official, I see firsthand the impact of anti-Muslim political rhetoric and debate on my community," says Baldeh, reflecting that "the recent rise in anti-Muslim sentiment around the country is troubling and affects real people's lives every day." "It drives me, as I know it does Representative Pocan, to be an advocate for those fleeing persecution and to protect the rights and freedoms of our country."

Along with Christian, Jewish, and Muslim members of Congress, Pocan decided this year to highlight respect for religious diversity in general and for American followers of Islam in particular by inviting prominent Muslims to hear President Obama deliver his final State of the Union address.

"The anti-Muslim rhetoric by leading political figures in this country is alarming," explained Pocan. "By bringing Alder Baldeh to the State of the Union I want to send a message to the Muslim community that this bigotry and fear mongering will not be tolerated. America has always remained a land of opportunity and hope for people of every faith and ethnicity. It is vital to remind ourselves of these core values, especially when some politicians try to spread hate in the name of votes."

Among the roughly 20 members of the House and Senate who are inviting Muslims to the State of the Union address are Congressman Keith Ellison, D-Minnesota, the first Muslim American elected to Congress, and Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz, the Floridian who chairs the Democratic National Committee chairwoman.

In addition, the Obama administration has invited Refaai Hamo, a Muslim refugee who recently arrived from Syria. Hamo, whose wife and daughter were killed in a missile attack, will sit with first lady Michelle Obama Tuesday night. So, too, will Naveed Shah, a Muslim-American veteran who served in Iraq.

"This is a way to say: Not on our watch," says Ellison, whose guest will be his, Elijah, a US Army medic who is one of many Muslims serving.

"We're not going to sit here and let people spout hateful stuff about any group," adds the congressman. Ellison and Wasserman Schultz sent a letter to colleagues, urging them to "stand against hate" by inviting Muslims to Tuesday's speech.

"Predictably, the vile comments castigating the entire Muslim population of the world, including American Muslims, have translated into a shameful and dangerous rise of attacks on individuals and vandalism of religious institutions," they wrote. "This rhetoric and these actions are simply un-American. They undermine our values and weaken our ability to be a force for good around the world."

Anti-Muslim, anti-refugee and anti-immigrant rhetoric has been all too common in recent months, as Republican politicians like Donald Trump and Ted Cruz have abandoned historic respect for religious pluralism. They are proposing to disregard the historic America values by employing religious tests in order to determine who can enter the United States—and in order to determine members of religious minorities are treated.

Inviting Muslim Americans to join the audience at the State of the Union address is not enough to undo all the damage that has been done by Trump and Cruz—and by the Republican politicians who emulate them. But the welcoming of Muslims to the Capitol in Washington does provide a reminder that, from the time of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, America's wisest leaders have respected religious pluralism. And that wise contemporary leaders, like President Obama and enlightened members of Congress such as Pocan, Ellison and Wasserman Schultz, still do.

The hidden joy of charity shops

By Helen Lewis, *New Statesman*, 19 May 2016

Camden is a bric-a-brac kind of place – market stalls, blaring music, occasional offers of weed. But the back room of the Sue Ryder charity shop on Parkway is immaculate, with hooped petticoats waiting to be steamed and crockery stacked neatly on the shelves. I've come to talk to the shop's manager, Oya, and one of her volunteers, Mary*, and they are waiting for me with milky tea and chocolate-chip cookies.

Mary is nervous. She is afraid of having her real name printed. "It's shaming to tell you my story but I believe if I tell people at the right time, good things will happen," she says. Now in her fifties, she arrived in Britain four years ago from Italy, without friends or savings, having left her husband. The jobcentre gave her an Oyster card and told her to volunteer at a charity shop to improve her English. "So we put her on the tills," says Oya. "That's what we do with anyone who gets sent to us to learn English."

But Mary had a secret. She couldn't find anywhere to live, so every afternoon, when she finished her shift at the shop, she would go to the jobcentre and laugh and joke with the staff there to cover up the reality that she didn't have anywhere else to go. When the jobcentre closed, she would ride the 31 bus through the night, from White City to Camden and back again. It was the best way to stay warm. Then, every morning, she would arrive at the shop early, brush her teeth in the staff bathroom and change into fresh clothes – washed in a friend's hostel room. No one else knew.

The charity Crisis calls people such as Mary "the hidden homeless" and says that it is almost impossible to estimate how many of them there are in Britain today. Most homeless people don't qualify for accommodation in shelters but eke out their time shuttling between friends' sofas, insecure rented accommodation, bed and breakfasts or sleeping rough on the streets.

Eventually, the shop manager – Oya's predecessor – asked Mary what was wrong and her story tumbled out. Between them, with help from the jobcentre staff, Mary found a studio flat and moved from volunteering on the tills to working at a nearby convenience store, where she is now a supervisor. Both she and Oya have to stop to reach for tissues while telling me this story. "Sue Ryder is my family," says Mary. "Sometimes I want to cry but there are no tears left. And Allah would be angry if I dared to cry now, with all that I have."

Despite having a paid job, Mary still volunteers at the charity shop on Friday mornings. She leaves at 3pm to work the evening shift at the convenience store. She and Oya are firm friends outside work. Mary brings in home-cooked lasagne for Oya and her daughter – "She says, 'Eat some tonight, freeze the rest for Ella'" – and Oya invites her round and cooks her Turkish food on Friday nights. "She'll say working here saved her life," says Oya. "I'll say I made a friend for life."

The reason I'm here is a selfish one. Volunteering for a charity is the perfect antidote to a culture that can often feel mercenary, cynical and ruthlessly individualistic. I wish more people did it. I'm also here because in December, I wrote a piece defending charities from accusations that many do not turn every penny of donations into outlay on their projects. But running charity shops requires upfront investment – on electricity, rent and wages – so it's too simplistic to demand that all the money they receive should go straight back out of the door. That article prompted the management of Sue Ryder, which operates 457 shops with 12,000 volunteers, to get in touch and invite me in. Some of their volunteers, like Mary, need to learn English and other skills before they can get a paying job; some are serving prison sentences; others are youngsters sent unwillingly by their schools for work experience. (Jackie, who now manages one of the charity's shops in Aberdeen, had previously been imprisoned three times.)

Not that everything is rosy in the charity shop back room. Oya says that some people use them as a "dumping ground". I tell her that I once read a story about a donation of tights that had a used sanitary towel still stuck to the crotch and they nod: "We had that." Oya is very proud, however, that the store "doesn't smell like a charity shop".

As well as providing jobs and raising money, stores such as this one provide a useful social barometer. There are around 9,000 charity shops in the UK and their number rose 30 per cent in the five years following the financial crash of 2007. Since then, the economic downturn has increased trade significantly. Last year at the shop in Camden, the number of donation bags increased by 52 per cent and takings went up by 8 per cent, yielding a net profit of £65,000.

*Her name has been changed.

What does the Scots language have to do with Scottish identity?

The pro-independence National newspaper has published an edition partly in Scots. Why?

By Pavel Iosad, *New Statesman*, 8 January 2016

It can sometimes seem like hardly a day passes by in Scottish politics without a social media storm. Yet the occasion of the latest disturbance may have seemed puzzling as the independence-supporting National sported a front page describing Labour's latest "stairheid rammy" and calling the SNP "underdugs". The occasion? A column by writer Matthew Fitt.

The reactions were numerous – and perhaps surprising. According to widespread opinion, Scottish identity is a (if not the) major driving factor in support for independence. Something as Scottish as the Scots language should surely find broad support in that camp? But no – widespread derision followed from all sides. "Jings and crivvens, help ma boab"; "My parents never left Angus but don't speak that"; "This isn't even Scots, just broken English"; and that most damning description of all, "slang".

The consensus among academics, if maybe not among laypeople, is that historically Scots is indisputably a sister language of English, sprung from the same Old English root, with a liberal admixture of Scandinavian speech, through the dialects of what is today the north of England. Scots spread through the Lowlands (and Northern Isles, and not to forget the north of Ireland) as Gaelic consolidated in the Highlands, becoming elaborated into a language of literature and law at court and throughout the country's burghs. After the Union, as English became the language of getting on, the tradition waned as Standard English displaced it – an unmistakably Scottish variety of it, but not a direct descendant of Older Scots.

Who even speaks Scots today? That question is both easy and devilishly difficult. Easy, because a question on Scots was included in the latest census, with over a million people stating they had at least some skills in the language. Difficult, because drawing hard lines in among the rich variety of current Scottish speech is not a task for the faint-hearted. And, more to the point, is there such a thing as Scots still, or has it merged with the sea of English stretching from Wellington and Lagos to New Delhi and Anchorage?

Certainly there are places in Scotland where people are proud of local speech, such as the Borders, the north-east with its "Doric", and the Northern Isles. But, you will hear, that has nothing to do with the artificial Scots of the occasional parliamentary publication, or Hugh MacDiarmid's "synthetic Scots". Similarly, everyone recognises the existence of distinctive varieties spoken in Scotland's cities: but you probably won't find people outside the academy calling Glaswegian or Dundonian "urban Scots", though many of their distinctive features go back to traditional Scots speech.

The Scots language is trapped in a confused identity. Local speech is thriving, and it is understood to be authentic and rooted in a community, but precisely for that reason it resists being used as a common vehicle of communication (unless the local colour is part of the point), and so "no one speaks the standard". Well, reply the advocates, that's what a standard is — people don't really speak English as if they were writing it, either. Yet that does not appear to convince. Why?

Scottish nationalism is not driven by or even widely associated with language rights. Unlike Wales, where Plaid Cymru has always been a pro-Welsh language party, or Catalan and Basque autonomist movements, the SNP does not distinguish itself on the language policy front – for instance, it continues the policies of the Gaelic Language Act, passed under Labour with cross-party support, but does not preside over a sustained push for the expansion of Gaelic; and unlike Northern Ireland, where language has become enmeshed in community divides, it is not generally a battleground for party-political contention.

Attitudes to written Scots culture are shaped instead by the overall marginalisation of non-standard varieties, pushed as they are on the one hand into the twee tartan world of the Broons and on the other hand strongly associated with the speech of the urban working class and therefore seen as having little cultural value. Criticism of language rarely has to do with language itself: it acts, most of time, as a proxy for social attitudes. In Scotland, it still remains to be seen whether written Scots becomes an instrument of democratic empowerment, conferring prestige on hitherto marginalised voices, or whether it does get finally relegated to an intensely local medium of communication.

What can the Conservatives do for ethnic minority Britons?

The New Statesman, 22 March 2016

The brutal truth is that it has always been smart politics for mainstream Conservatives to avoid thinking about race, and to ignore the votes of people of colour. To start with they have been dogged for almost half a century by the disastrous legacy of Enoch Powell. Silence always seemed the better part of valour. And, anyway, until recently there haven't been that many non-white votes to be had. People of colour were less likely to register to vote. Of those who did register, many didn't turn up on the day. Of those who did, the vast majority invariably sided with the Labour Party. And the most compelling argument for remaining tight-lipped about race - for both left and the right - was that conspicuous efforts to appeal to minority voters were thought likely to lose more white votes than they gained from people of colour.

But things are changing. The Prime Minister's recent declaration that his administration will not have succeeded if it has not made strides in tackling racial and ethnic inequality was a milestone for British politics. He pinpointed educational failure and chronic discrimination as major issues within British society, and called for change. Second, Cameron's appointment of Louise Casey, the candid, no-nonsense civil servant, to encourage the integration of minority groups - not least Muslim Britons - is a refreshing, if belated, acknowledgement that entire communities are gradually drifting away from the mainstream.

Most importantly, the Tory leader's demarche effectively buries the lingering taint of Powellism. Our Prime Minister hasn't yet gone as far as his German counterpart Angela Merkel did in 2005, when she told Germans that immigrants should no longer be treated as a problem to be solved, but as an opportunity to be embraced. Yet the idea of a non-partisan, national mission to eliminate racial discrimination finally seems possible.

It's about time. There are several reasons why our country desperately needs a change of gear on race equality. To start with, there's the democratic case. Under both the British and American systems, a party's electoral success can rest on its ability to persuade a minority of opposition voters. But as the Republican Party is discovering, with immigration and asymmetric birth-rates boosting ethnic minority populations, it is increasingly impossible to assemble a credible plurality without appealing to the needs of minority voters. Second, race in politics isn't only about the influence of minorities. It's also about the principles and values of the whole electorate. In the UK racism has become - amongst the young at least - a kind of original sin.

Conservatives could hardly ignore the change in public sentiment.

Third, the centre-right is finally waking up to the fact that many migrants share their values and behaviours. Today, socially conservative African, Filipino and Latino immigrants are breathing new life into both the Church of England and Roman Catholicism. David Voas, a sociologist, predicts that: "The future of religion in Britain is to be found in Islam and the black majority churches". The 2011 census painted a similar picture of marriage.

More than 98 per cent of UK marriages are between couples of the same ethnicity. The character of these unions therefore gives us a good idea of cultural attitudes to family formation within different communities. For households with a UK born head, marriage rates are around 65 per cent; cohabitation rates are 17 per cent. Amongst minority households from the Middle East and Asia - the largest minority group - the equivalent figures are 79 per cent and six per cent. The contrast is even more pronounced with Indian households.

And then there is education, often the only legacy left intact after the process of international migration.

Academic achievement is characteristically a priority for many immigrant families; children from these backgrounds are twice as likely to receive private tuition outside schools as their white peers. At 29 per cent, the proportion of ethnic minority pupils is significantly higher in private schools than in state schools (23 per cent). Most of these children are not rich foreigners; even amongst British nationals, minorities are over-represented in the sector. These are ambitious new Brits.

Finally the left's weakness has delivered the centre-right a window of opportunity. After decades of taking the loyalty of ethnic minority voters for granted, European social democracy is struggling to find a story for itself that reconciles social diversity with equality. In the UK, Labour has even surrendered its historic symbolic parliamentary advantage. Before 2010, almost all MPs of colour were on the Labour benches; today, 17 of the 40 minority MPs in the House of Commons are Conservatives.

For the first time in 50 years, the Tories can get a hearing on race equality. But they now face the challenge of developing a modern stance on race equality which does not undermine their commitment to individual freedom and the primacy of the market, or send a signal to white voters that their interests are suddenly less important than those of minorities.

How London turned inside out, and why it matters

By Kat Hanna, *New Statesman*, 4 January 2016

Whether it be in op-eds on airport expansion, debates on tall buildings or increasingly cramped commutes, Londoners are reminded on a daily basis that our city is growing. Earlier this year, Boris marked London's population reaching its pre-war high of 8.165 million. But the capital's growth will not stop there. By 2037, we will have to absorb a population equivalent to Greater Manchester.

But London is not just growing, it is being turned inside out. And this much less familiar transformation of the social geography of London is hardly less consequential than the city's growth.

Centre for London's latest report *Inside Out* shows that London is experiencing a form of socio-economic osmosis, with outer London experiencing rising poverty rates, while rates in inner London drop. Often thought of as mono-cultural, outer London boroughs have seen the fastest rise in resident born overseas – many now have rates similar to multicultural inner London boroughs. That could have profound consequences for individuals, local communities, London boroughs and London politics.

A successful and inclusive London means understanding the changes that are taking place, and planning ahead for the implications that population change will have on public services. Yet local authorities must deal with two great unknowns; populations that are changing and churning, and drastic cuts to funding for public services. Over the past five years, London boroughs have absorbed real terms funding cuts of 44 per cent. If we look at reductions in spending per head, we can see that population growth amplifies the reduction in spending. Quite simply, even where funding has increased in real terms, it has not been able to keep with population growth. The two boroughs with the greatest percentage change in resident population, Tower Hamlets and Newham, have seen some of the greatest reductions in service spending per head – 19 per cent and 24 per cent respectively.

Not only must local authority funding keep up with population growth, certain local authorities are dealing with drastically changing demographic profiles. The challenges and opportunities these changes place on communities are multi-faceted, and go beyond narratives of gentrification and regeneration. Dropping poverty rates in inner East London mask the fact the inner east boroughs still house the highest proportions of children and old people living in poverty in the country. The influx of young professionals into these boroughs further suggests a dilution of poverty rather than a solution to it.

At the same time, outer London boroughs may see an increase in "inner city problems", associated with younger, less well-off populations, including homeless and growing demands on health services. These changing demographics do not only place a demand on social services and health care, but also on how local authorities spatially plan for growth. Investment in infrastructure, including housing, must take into account the shifting distribution of wealth and poverty in London. Investing in infrastructure which connects outer London to the centre will open up employment opportunities and deliver huge economic benefits, as is highlighted in Centre for London's forthcoming research on rail devolution in South London.

Yet across London, it is planning and development departments that have borne the brunt of cuts, with boroughs such as Islington and Hackney seeing expenditure per head drop by some 60 per cent. At the time when spatial planning, economic strategy and building control matter the most, local authorities do not have the resources required.

Admittedly, the Comprehensive Spending Review cuts have been less severe than expected. However, maintaining public services is not just about protecting boroughs from spending cuts – it means ensuring that boroughs have the resources needed to manage population growth. This management is about more than the nuts and bolts of infrastructure and public service delivery. It requires creating and maintaining a sense of place in a time of rapid population change, and against a backdrop of reduced resources. The population we are looking at in any borough in 2001 is not the same as the population in 2011. London is churning. In 2008, just 60% of the people living in inner London boroughs had been there for more than five years.

The challenges that these population changes pose for local authorities would be great in any circumstances, but they are amplified by the cuts they face. Without the funding in place, some may struggle to keep up. The move away from formula-based local authority funding to growth-based may well be a welcome concession to the different demands faced by boroughs, yet it also brings instability, especially in the context of reduced central government grants.

We need to accept that London is growing and plan for it. But equally, we need to accept that London is changing internally, and we must plan for that as well.

We shouldn't be surprised by Northern Ireland's abortion conviction

The New Statesman, 5 APRIL 2016

In modern society, we're used to the idea that the letter of the law and its execution are two different things. Since 1839, it has been illegal to shake out a doormat on a UK street after 8am. It is, for some reason, illegal to handle a salmon under "suspicious circumstances". Euthanasia, streaming pirated videos and smoking marijuana are each, in their way, illegal in the UK, but offenders are rarely prosecuted.

This status quo perhaps explains why we reacted with shock and horror to the news that in Northern Ireland, a woman has been handed a two month suspended sentence for ordering abortion pills online after her flatmates reported her to the police. Unlike in the rest of the UK, abortions are illegal in Northern Ireland unless the life or mental health of the mother is in danger. The court's adherence to this law earned the case headlines all over the world.

Perhaps it isn't surprising that we are surprised. Women in Ireland, as in many abortion-unfriendly countries that lie near more liberal ones, obtain abortions all the time – they order drugs online and don't get caught, or else they fly to England or another country where the procedure is not restricted. In 2001, the charity Women on Waves visited Ireland from the Netherlands to distribute abortion pills from the deck of a ship.

This use of loopholes (loopholes often heavily laced with privilege, and the price of an air flight abroad, and flatmates who won't report you when they find the remains of your abortion in a bin) has lulled us until we are shocked that a woman was convicted under a law specifically designed to restrict her access to choice.

Donald Trump remarked last week that if abortions were recriminalised in the US, there should be "some sort of punishment" for women who obtain them. The peculiar thing about the resultant outrage was that it did not focus on the root problem – that many people in the US, including Trump, want to criminalise a woman for choosing what to do with her body – but the fact that he would take this law to its logical conclusion. Why are we too scared to directly legislate in favour of women, rather than protect the loopholes that sometimes allow them rights over their body? Is a situation where abortion is criminalised such that it can't be provided safely, yet women can somehow escape direct punishment, really the best we can hope for?

It is a trope within liberal thinking (and, perhaps, all political thinking) to assume that once everyone you know is convinced of a truth, that everyone else is too. As a result, we begin to think that top-down legislation isn't necessary. This is perhaps why we must be reminded, over and over again, that the anti-abortion lobby isn't "over there" – it's in Ireland, a flight or a ferry way. And it's in the Commons, where challenges to the abortion laws come regularly, in various guises, but always to the same end: to restrict access. Women in Scotland, England and Wales already need the signatures of two doctors before they can apply for the procedure.

We should have learned by now that thinking something that most of our friends think, and assuming others agree, is not enough. When we hear that rape within marriage only became illegal in 1991, we tut at the slow, antiquated legal system, rather than acknowledging the reality: that until the rights we agree on are encoded from the top down, they may as well not exist. We don't want to realise that in their heart of hearts, many men believe they have a right to extract sex from their wives. It's far easier to argue over specifics with those you broadly agree with than it is to face the fact that large chunks of the world do not, and would happily wrench your freedoms from you given half the chance.

Women's refuges – currently subject to a back and forth debate within the feminist community over who precisely can use them – currently face existential threats in the form of government cuts and a lack of societal support. That's not to say that both debates shouldn't go on concurrently, but that we can't afford to be in any way optimistic about society's views on women's services and women's rights. Any help given to women appears to some as an attack on male privilege, and as a result, we must keep fighting those who want that privilege back even after it seems like the rights have been won.

Those attacking women's services are now often switched on enough to claim they do agree with your principles, even as they take away the concrete expressions of them. George Osborne was charitable enough to agree that domestic violence shelters need more funding, before diverting only the taxes women pay on tampons, because women should pay for male violence, I assume. Jenny Smith, who was one of the first women to shelter from her husband in a woman's sanctuary in the 1970s, told the Guardian that "women are suffering more than ever".

Trousers for All: why are girls still being required to wear skirts to school?

The New Statesman, 9 March 2016

While I question both the practical and stylistic merits of trousers and shorts, I will defend to the death the right of other women to make their own sartorial choices. For this reason I am broadly in favour of Trousers for All, a UK-wide group campaigning to give girls the option of wearing trousers as part of their school uniform.

While most schools already permit this, there remain a number who do not. This week, as part of the University of Manchester's social justice festival JustFest, academics Dr Katia Chornik and Professor Claire Hale will argue that this is in breach of the Department of Education's School Uniform document and the Equality Act 2010.

"Both documents," says Chornik, "emphasise the need to avoid uniforms which are expensive and which treat one sex less favourably than the other. In our view the practice of banning trousers for girls is gender discrimination and prejudice against females". But is it really?

Certainly, the 2010 Equality Act states that uniform policies should not discriminate on the basis of sex.

However, it also maintains that "differences in dress requirements for girls and boys are standard, and where they don't have significantly more detrimental effects on one sex or the other they are unlikely to be regarded as discriminatory". The trouble comes with deciding what constitutes a "significantly more detrimental effect" (while not getting distracted by the annoying implication that a mildly detrimental effect is a-okay). It's very difficult to do this in a truly objective way, which leads me to think that perhaps the act itself has got things the wrong way round.

When differentiating between male and female pupils, the point, surely, should not be to ask how harmful the effects of such differentiation could be, but whether the differentiation is necessary in the first place. When it comes to withholding the right of one sex to wear trousers, the answer surely has to be a clear, resounding "no". Women and girls wear trousers in all sorts of situations, to no ill effects. Indeed, if we look at it from this angle, it becomes clear that sex discrimination is not some potential side-effect of an otherwise harmless gendering process. Sex discrimination – the placing of one sex in a position of disadvantage in relation to the other – is the entire point.

As is the case with so many seemingly trivial points of differentiation between men and women, what matters is not the thing in itself, but what it signifies. If the right to wear trousers had no broader meaning, women would not have had to fight for it, but fight for it they have. Trousers are associated with male privilege and dominance (hence the question "who wears the trousers?"). Female politicians were not permitted to wear them on the US Senate floor until 1993. It was 2013 before an (ultimately rarely used) bylaw requiring women in Paris to ask permission from city authorities before "dressing as men" was finally revoked. Women in Malawi were not permitted to wear trousers at all between 1965 and 1994 and still face threats and attacks for doing so. This is not about style or gender as play, but power, and it remains the case even if we are discussing something as seemingly minor and mundane as school uniform.

Numerous studies have shown that stereotype threat – a situation in which people feel themselves to be at risk of conforming to negative stereotypes pertaining to their social group – matters a great deal when considering gender and education. Simply being reminded that one is the social construct "boy" or "girl", as opposed to just "a pupil", can affect an individual's perception of his or her own ability and response to particular subject areas (eg "girls are no good at maths", "boys don't read books" etc). A school should be the last place where gendered codes which have already been broken down elsewhere are suddenly reintroduced. For a girl to have to wear a skirt in the classroom when she can wear trousers elsewhere sends a very particular message to her. She is not simply a learner; she is a girl-learner, confined by unspoken rules which limit her individual potential and constrain her social interactions.

This is not the only reason why Trousers for All wish for the rules to be changed and I must confess to not being fully behind some of the others. While I know it to be true that "some girls do not like to display their legs because they consider them either too fat or too thin" (indeed, I was one of them), I hardly think permitting them to cover up is the ideal solution. More worryingly, the "personal safety" justification – "It is easier to run away wearing trousers, they are more difficult for an attacker to get off and school trousers, while smart, can hardly be described as a provocative form of clothing" – seems to me to play into the hands of victim-blamers. "Why was she wearing such a short skirt?" becomes "why was she wearing a skirt at all?".

What really bothers me, though, is the one-sidedness of the approach. Why just trousers? Why not skirts, too?

Who'll win the European referendum? It all depends on the young

By Bobby Duffy, *New Statesman*, 7 June 2016

David Cameron and all other In campaigners are worried about young people not voting in the EU Referendum. They should be. The logic is simple: young people are more positive about the EU, as a group they would vote to stay in, but they are much less likely to be registered to vote, and even those that are vote less – so their views are in danger of being outweighed by older people.

It's not surprising then that it's the In campaigners that have been most vocal. But beyond narrow campaign advantage, there are real legitimacy concerns. The consequences will be felt by the young "stronger and longer" – and given it could take 10 years to actually Brexit, by then we'll have an additional decade's worth of young people in the voting population – and lot fewer of our current older age group.

The logic is simple, but is it right? Let's take each stage in turn.

Remain does have a massive advantage with the young. Among all under 35s in our latest poll, 68 per cent say they would vote to remain, while only 36 per cent of those aged 65+ say they would vote to stay.

And this support for remain among the young is built on much more positive views of EU, not fear of the consequences of Brexit. Two in five (38 per cent) say they trust the EU – which may not seem a massive vote of confidence, but it's twice the level of trust that older people have in the EU, and twice the level we have in our own government.

And here's the important bit. There is a counter argument that these attitudes are just a feature of youth, and that as they get older, this cohort's views will change: in ten years' time they will be much closer to older people's views. It's not that their elders know better, it's just that we change, often in predictable ways as we go through life events, like leaving university, getting a job, buying (or, these days, more likely renting) our own place and having children.

But that doesn't seem to be the case with attitudes to the EU, as our new analysis shows. There seems to be something different about this particular cohort of young people: they've always been more positive, and they're maintaining a consistent gap from older groups, at least for the last 12 years.

There's even a growing generational gap on highly related issues like immigration. The oldest age group is twice as likely to be concerned about immigration as the young, a pattern that's become stronger in the last five years. So, as far as we can tell, it's likely that today's young people will continue to be more positive about Europe than older cohorts.

So will they be outweighed in the referendum? This is where the inequity is clear. The under 35s, often called Generation Y or millennials, are actually now a very large generation – there are 14.1 million of them, much bigger than the 10.7 million who are aged 65 or over.

But they are much less likely to be registered or to vote.

There are no accurate figures on the age profile of who's correctly registered to vote, as demographic details like age are not held on the electoral register. But all the estimates are that the young are disproportionately under-represented, not least because of the shift to individual electoral registration (IER), rather than household or block registration at universities.

For example, official studies by the Electoral Commission show that even prior to IER only 70 per cent of 20-24 year olds were on the register, compared with 95 per cent of those aged 65 or over. Other more recent estimates suggest that 3.5 million young people under 35 are missing.

And even among those registered, young people are less likely to turn out.

For example, the British Election Survey followed up last year's general election and validated who actually voted by checking claimed votes against the marked-up register of who actually did. This shows that 57 per cent of 18-34s claimed to have voted, but only 51 per cent actually did, compared with 85 per cent of those aged 65 and over who actually voted.

The EU referendum is clearly different from a general election – but we are seeing similar levels of claimed certainty to vote as we measured in the general election, and the bookies are predicting a similar level of overall turnout.

So if the patterns seen at the general election translated into the referendum, it would mean that there will only be around 6.7m young people voting compared with 8.6m of those aged 65 or over. Generation Y is 30 per cent bigger than this older group, but they will have significantly less voting power.

There are no facts about the future – and pollsters will tell you that's particularly the case in trying to predict who will actually vote. One thing is certain, younger people will have to live with the consequences of the referendum, good and bad, for longer than older groups so they need to ignore the cringeworthy campaigns and vote anyway.

More people than ever use food banks in Britain today – and I'm one of them

As the Trussell Trust reveals that food bank usage is at record levels, one user writes about her experiences.

By Bill Haydon, *New Statesman*, 15 April 2016

- 5 Today I read that food bank figures are the highest they've ever been, and I feel compelled to tell my story. I am one of those statistics.
- I live less than four miles from the seat of government, in London's wealthiest borough. Through an accident of fate, I've found myself living alongside some of the city's most affluent residents at a time in my life when I am most depleted financially, emotionally and physically. I had a breakdown several years ago, which has led to
- 10 severe depression with associated anxiety and a range of physical ailments. I am unable to work at present and I am dependent on Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) through the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).
- My designated food bank operates out of a nearby church and I feel a deep sense of shame and anxiety on the way there. I worry that someone I know locally will stop to chat and I will be exposed as broke and dependent
- 15 on charity.
- The food bank volunteers, however, are kind and solicitous. They introduce themselves, shake my hand, and invite me to sit in chairs thoughtfully grouped at conversational angles. I am not interrogated and nobody towers over me; I am grateful for the eye contact and empathy I receive in response to my tale of benefit delays, impoverishment and worries about the rent. I am offered tea, cake and cheerful conversation in the most
- 20 welcoming tradition of the church. It feels as though the whole process has been carefully worked out in order to preserve my dignity and I am moved by this tenderness.
- I am taken through a questionnaire to determine my needs and I am happy to be offered choices: between pasta and rice, or tea and coffee, or tinned fish and beans. I am also happy at the prospect of some toiletries as my limited budget means I often have to trade shampoo and sanitary towels off against more urgent food needs. It is
- 25 a facsimile of a shopping experience but it helps.
- At the beginning of this year, my ESA benefit was suspended due to a crucial form going missing in the system. I posted the form, on time and as requested, but it has gone astray. This is not the first time this has happened and it took nearly two years to restore me to the full ESA benefit the last time. The DWP is very quick to cut off payments and very slow to restore them, even when this is due to bureaucratic bungling rather than any attempt
- 30 to illegally manipulate the system on my part.
- The DWP will not call or write to me to tell me that I am in danger of losing my benefit. The ball will always be in my court and it will always be up to me to follow up, to keep meticulous records of every letter and conversation.
- Every time I speak to the DWP, I have to carefully rehearse what I plan to say because I am almost guaranteed
- 35 that the person I deal with will be brusque and will not offer any unsolicited information without being asked in exactly the right way. I have never, ever been asked how I am feeling, or whether my health is better or worse. I have never received any sort of acknowledgement of error or ineptitude by the department.
- When I am ill and at my lowest ebb, it will still be up to me to find an advocate at my local Citizens Advice Bureau and articulate my case to someone who may be experienced in dealing with the bureaucracy but who is
- 40 also cranky and over-stretched and working out of a crummy office with broken chairs and dodgy heating.
- In my experience, the DWP is an impenetrable and Kafkaesque monolith. I have studied public management at postgraduate level, speak English as my first language and have worked in the voluntary sector for over two decades and I still find it almost impossible to navigate this system. Indeed, I am suspicious that the system has been deliberately set up to deter applicants as much as possible through obfuscation, bureaucratic delays and lack
- 45 of clear information.
- After every encounter with the DWP, whether over the phone, in writing or at the Job Centre, I am left feeling sullied and exhausted.
- As I unpack my groceries, I am deeply grateful that there are good citizens out there who have a bit to spare. I am also deeply angry that it is up to the churches and charities to plug the gaps left by a welfare state that seems
- 50 to be creaking under sustained ideological pressure in one of the world's richest countries. I feel guilty that my poverty is nothing compared to the suffering of those in developing nations or walking the roads of hostile Europe seeking refuge from war. And I am thankful that I have enough to eat for a while longer and that I will live to fight another day.

Brexit would negatively affect lives of millions, official UK report says

The Guardian, Monday 29 February 2016

Car manufacturing, farming, financial services and the lives of millions of Britons living in Europe will all be affected as the UK takes 10 years to extricate itself from the EU, an official report says.

The government's first official analysis into how Brexit would unfold in practice says a decade of uncertainty would hit "financial markets, investment and the value of the pound". It also warns that the rights of 2 million British expats to work and access pensions and healthcare in EU countries may no longer be guaranteed.

Written by civil servants in the Cabinet Office, and seen first by the *Guardian*, the document says it would not be feasible to leave the EU within the two-year time frame stipulated by existing treaties. "A vote to leave the EU would be the start, not the end, of a process. It could lead to up to a decade or more of uncertainty," they concluded.

The 10 years cited in the report includes the time it would take for Britain to exit the EU, to set up a new trade and related agreements as well as negotiate fresh trade deals with the US and other countries. The document says they would only be completed at the end of a three-stage process that will be triggered in June if Britain votes to leave the EU.

Out campaigners have accused the government of launching "Project Fear" and claim the riskier scenario for Britain is staying inside the EU. They compare extreme warnings to those made when Britain was considering joining the euro.

Chris Grayling, the leader of the House of Commons, who is one of five cabinet ministers campaigning to leave the EU, dismissed the idea that it would take twice as long as the second world war to negotiate new arrangements.

Grayling said: "People will not be impressed with this relentless campaign of fear. Claims that it will take twice as long to sort out a free trade deal with the EU as it did to win world war two are clearly ludicrous. There's a

free trade zone from Iceland to the Russian border and Britain will still be part of it after we Vote Leave. "The in campaign claims we have no real choice other than giving away more power and money to the EU every year. It isn't true. The real uncertainty is voting to stay in an EU which is already struggling with the euro crisis, the migration crisis, and a youth unemployment crisis. It is safer to take back control and spend our money on our priorities."

Iain Duncan Smith, the work and pensions secretary, said the European migration crisis posed a larger threat to the UK than Brexit. "Why would we have such a low opinion of the British people that we go out and talk about 'leaping into the dark', we talk about 'profound shocks'?" he asked on the BBC's Andrew Marr Show. He added: "The in campaign's whole strategy seems to be about basically saying we're too small, we're too little ... This country is the greatest on earth."

Monday's report claims that the process by which Britain would leave the EU would be complex and grinding, with other European countries trying to extract as much as possible.

It says the only legal way to withdraw from the EU is through article 50 of the treaty of the European Union. But it argues that there is no precedent for this and that Britain would be unlikely to achieve a successful negotiation in the two-year time period it sets out.

Extending the process would require the unanimous agreement of all 27 of the other EU countries – and could result in states pushing for concessions, it says. Meanwhile, a new agreement on trade and wider co-operation might require ratification in some national parliaments.

"The UK's withdrawal from the EU would mean unravelling all the rights and obligations – from access to the single market, to structural funds for poorer regions, to joint action on sanctions – that the UK has acquired both during our accession to the EU and over our 40-year membership. As well as negotiating its withdrawal, the UK would also want to negotiate its post-exit arrangements with the EU," the officials claim.

The report details a number of issues that would have to be resolved in any Brexit negotiations, including access for UK citizens to the European health insurance card, cross-border security arrangements, the rights of UK fishermen to fish in non-UK waters, including in the North Sea, and access to the agency that monitors the safety of medicines.

The government argues that British trade would also be plunged into uncertainty as it would become necessary to renegotiate individual deals with more than 50 countries that have an arrangement with the EU.

The report says the UK will be "constrained" in its ability to secure those agreements until the first round of Brexit negotiations are complete. It suggests that the US might not even enter talks with the UK before concluding its own agreements with the remaining EU countries.

Nicola Sturgeon to resume drive for Scottish independence

The Guardian, Saturday 12 March 2016

Nicola Sturgeon will spearhead a renewed drive to build support for Scottish independence this summer, pledging to turn the 45% who voted to leave the UK in the 2014 referendum into "a strong and positive majority".

To a rapturous reception from about 3,000 delegates at the Scottish National party's spring conference in Glasgow on Saturday afternoon, the party leader and first minister cautioned supporters: "We will not achieve our dream of independence just by wishing that the outcome of the referendum had been different – or wishing that we could do it all again next week."

With just seven weeks to go before May's Scottish parliament elections, she said: "We will achieve independence only when we persuade a majority of our fellow citizens that it is the best future for our country." Sturgeon's focus on the independence debate is a mark of supreme confidence in her party which is enjoying unprecedented levels of support across Scotland, leaving Labour trailing in the polls.

Insisting that the initiative, which will launch this summer, would not be an attempt to "browbeat" anyone, and that she still respected those who support the union, Sturgeon said: "I also know that many wanted to be persuaded in 2014, but ultimately didn't find our arguments compelling enough. So we will listen to what you have to say.

"We will hear your concerns and address your questions and, in the process, we will be prepared to challenge some of our own answers."

The first minister appeared to put the brakes on moves towards a second independence referendum at the party's main conference last November by declaring that the Scottish government would hold fire until "strong and consistent evidence" emerged of a change in public opinion.

But on Saturday, directly addressing those who remain uncertain about leaving the UK, she said: "Patiently and respectfully, we will seek to convince you that independence really does offer the best future for Scotland. A future shaped not by perpetual Tory governments that we don't vote for, but by our own choices and our own endeavours. That is how we will turn the 45% of September 2014 into a strong and positive majority for independence."

With polling regularly indicating that more than half of Scottish voters will support the SNP in May's Holyrood elections, Sturgeon promised not to take this for granted as she asked to be returned for a historic third term.

In another key announcement, she pledged not to raise the basic rate of income tax if the SNP was returned to power, saying: "I don't think there's anything leftwing about a competition over who can tax ordinary people the most."

Speaking to a packed hall in Glasgow's SECC, one of the only venues in Scotland big enough to contain the expanded SNP membership since the 2014 referendum, Sturgeon said: "Taxing the lowest paid doesn't tackle austerity; it simply passes the burden of Tory austerity to the shoulders of those who can least afford it and that is not fair."

It was "deeply wrong to give big tax cuts to the better paid as George Osborne is planning to do", she said, adding: "We will not do that; our choice will be to invest more in our public services instead."

From April 2017, Holyrood will be able to set the rates and bands of income tax for the first time. Scottish Labour and the Liberal Democrats have said that they would increase tax rates by 1p in the pound to pay for education.

Sturgeon said the Scottish government would set out its specific plans for income tax after next week's budget, but promised "reasonable and balanced" decisions. "They will be fair to all taxpayers, they will be fair to our economy and they will be fair to our public services," she said.

Sturgeon pledged to extend free school meals to children in nursery care, deliver superfast digital broadband to 100% of premises across Scotland and restore the Sure Start maternity grant cut by the Tories in 2010, replacing it with an expanded maternity and early years allowance.

John Swinney, Sturgeon's deputy and Holyrood election campaign manager, rallied the delegates as he opened the conference: "A couple of weeks ago, the prime minister came up to Scotland and talked about how much he feared an SNP victory in May. It seems the Tories don't like having a government in Scotland which stands up to them. Now I think that's good reason enough for us to get out there and campaign for a strong SNP victory."

The new pro-independence drive comes at the end of a week which saw the release of the worst headline figures on Scotland's finances for five years, fuelling critics to warn of the contrast between the rosy economic picture the SNP painted during the referendum campaign and the impact on the decline in oil revenues.

Phone hacking: 10 years of resignations, cover-ups and convictions

The Guardian, Friday 11 December 2015

It began in December 2005 when the Metropolitan police started an investigation into the hacking of Prince William's phone and has ended exactly 10 years later. In the intervening period, hundreds lost their jobs and many more reputations were both shredded and made, mainly on the legal benches.

More than 200 journalists at the News of the World lost their jobs. The then commissioner of the Metropolitan police, Paul Stephenson, fell on his sword, while Rebekah Brooks and the former executive chairman of News International, Les Hinton, both resigned in the initial aftermath.

After the experience faced by Murdoch's News UK, some may see some bias in Friday's move by prosecutors not to move against Mirror Group Newspapers.

But it was always going to be difficult for the Crown Prosecution Service to bring hacking cases against Mirror Group journalists to court. The cases against the News of the World executives and journalists drew early guilty pleas because they had documentary evidence of hacking in the form of Glenn Mulcaire's meticulous notes of commissions.

The original Met inquiry into hacking, Operation Carylaid, was set up in 2005 but was kicked into the long grass until the Guardian's investigative journalist Nick Davies found evidence of widespread hacking by Mulcaire. The 2005 inquiry had led to a prosecution of Mulcaire and the paper's royal editor but, as it later transpired, did not bring the scale of the hacking to light.

While the original Carylaid inquiry named only eight victims of Mulcaire's phone hacking, the subsequent Operation Weeting inquiry found Mulcaire's handwritten notes suggested he had targeted 6,349 people either to intercept their voicemail or to "blag" their confidential data. The original inquiry led to just two arrests. Weeting and its offshoots have arrested or interviewed under caution some 210 people and led to the marathon hacking trial of 2014.

The failure of the original Carylaid trial was highlighted during the marathon 2014 hacking trial seven years later when it transpired that Prince William, Prince Harry and Kate Middleton's phones had been hacked hundreds of times in those early years. That evidence was not brought to bear in the original Mulcaire trial in 2007.

But in the end it was the failure not just at the Met, but also the cover-up at News International that prompted the bigger scandal with Murdoch's executive holding the line that hacking was the work of one rogue journalist until 2010 when a celebrity, Sienna Miller, launched a civil case.

In January 2011, News Corporation decided the rogue line could no longer hold and for the first time fully cooperated with the police, handing over 300m emails to the Met and prompting a succession of arrests, first of News of the World journalists and later of journalists on the Sun.

While Scotland Yard had to contend with five years of failure to investigate hacking properly, News Corporation found itself plunged into a scandal that threatened ruination, with corporate charges in the US a possibility after it emerged that journalists had paid public officials for stories. This could have been a crime under the foreign corrupt practices act stateside.

News Corporation learned in February it would not be prosecuted in the US, but there was still a chance corporate charges would follow in the UK.

Friday's announcement that this would not happen was expected since October when the final two Sun journalists tried for alleged corrupt payments were cleared. Murdoch was so confident he reinstated Brooks, who had been cleared of all charges in the hacking trial, as chief executive of News UK.

While the Met got nine convictions out of 12 prosecutions for hacking, the outcome for Elveden was not good, with just two convictions out of the 34 people interviewed and/or charged.

For the Mirror, however, the story is not over. Its journalists will be relieved that the torturous wait for a charging decision is over – the former Mirror editor Piers Morgan says he never wants to talk about hacking again – but the company still faces more than 100 civil compensation claims and as of May it had set aside £28m for damages.

The Guardian view on social mobility: 'aspiration' will remain an aspiration until inequality is fixed
The Guardian, Friday 8 April 2016

Only in England would you look to the House of Lords for advice about social mobility. There is nothing wrong with today's report from the "mobility committee", which Britain's unelected peerage had touchingly set up for the job. Indeed, all the recommendations on the transition from school to work – parity of esteem for vocational education, better careers guidance, and smart engagement, rather than blank cheques, for employers – sound eminently sensible. Several individual members of the committee have a definite background in the real world, sometimes including elective politics. It would be an unforgivably cheap shot, even, to dismiss the insights the 16th earl of Kinnoull may have into barriers facing teenagers on troubled estates; after all, some great social reformers have emerged from Eton College before, among them Gladstone and Hugh Dalton.

The real doubts do not concern this committee's grasp of the class system, nor even their interest in breaking it down. No, the question – at the end of a week in which the Panama Papers have exposed the parallel, secretive world of a global elite – is whether it can ever be possible to make equality of opportunity a reality through incremental tweaks to things like vocational training. The worthy, progressive proposals are all, very much, what New Labour would have called evidence-based, "what works" stuff. These days, however, New Labour seems old, and there is less faith that "what works" policies will work to change very much. A black swan event of a financial crisis flew in from left-field, and exposed how little the people in charge of the system knew about it. As the crash gave way to cuts and zero-hours contracts, they continued to bleat about extending opportunity to places where hope had been snuffed out. With real wages falling and property prices rising ever further out of reach, a generation of centrist slogans – about aspiration, upward mobility and getting ahead – came to sound like hollow platitudes. Above all, it has become clearer than ever that the grotesque inequality of economic outcomes – which had opened up long before 2008, but which was felt more keenly once incomes started sinking – were at a point where it would be deluded to imagine that every youngster would have a fair shot to get to the top.

In a world in which, on the Oxfam calculation, 62 people own as much as the poorer half of human beings, privilege gets entrenched in all sorts of ways. At the less sinister end of the scale, costly qualifications, such as master's degrees, which well-to-do parents can fund for their children, become entry tickets for sought-after careers. Transparency about what happened to those who passed through lowlier courses earlier on in life, something the committee recommends, is never going to compensate for that. More pernicious, and more hidden, is the way in which big money warps politics. Anxiety about Britain's shortcomings in vocational education has been a recurrent anxiety since Prince Albert's commission in 1851, and the Lords committee's proposal for a more inclusive 14-18 curriculum has been made before, including by the Tomlinson report in 2004. The gulf between academic and vocational qualifications was never bridged, however, because Tony Blair's No 10 was terrified about howls of anguish that newspapers with wealthy owners would make on behalf of their well-to-do readers about the loss of advantage their children would face if traditional A-levels withered.

Despite the best intentions of individual peers, the current House of Lords really is a singularly inappropriate instrument for challenging such warping of priorities. The old blend of aristocracy and patronage has, since the last election, been aggravated by David Cameron's scattergun issue of coronets, creating record numbers of unelected lawmakers even as he tries to shrink the number of MPs. Hidden in the Panamanian vaults of Mossack Fonseca were the names of Conservative donors who were later put up for peerages. Which brings us back to the one final tilt on the playing field that is imposed by the reigning rich-versus-the-rest political economy: namely, inadequate public revenues.

When David Cameron writes to the EU urging caution on the taxation of trusts he also depletes the funds available for all careers advice and all those other initiatives that really could create room at the top. Upward social mobility for the lower ranks of society is a splendid aspiration, but it is not one that will be realised until the elite rediscovers its lost sense of noblesse oblige.

My students have paid £9,000 and now they think they own me

The Guardian, Friday 18 December 2015

As I made my way to my office at 7.30am last Thursday, I noticed an A4 poster stuck to the lift door. Then I noticed one on the wall. And one on the notice board. Then one on my classroom door. In fact, they were tacked to nearly every available surface along the corridor. And they all bore the same statement: "All I'm asking for is a little respect seeing as I pay you £9,000 a year."

I still don't know what prompted this flyer campaign – rumour has it that it's linked to a group of students who were denied assignment extensions – but I could not help but become annoyed at the blunt, consumerist language.

I started to think about the ways that my students act and speak, and the way I acted and spoke during my time at university. I will admit that I didn't do all of the readings, and yes, I may have missed a couple of lectures throughout the year, but I completed all assignments, followed the guidelines presented to me and understood the consequences of disengagement, without expecting my lecturers to chase after me like I was back in school. I wish I could say the same for my students.

As I walked through the car park with a colleague at the end of the day, we discussed the unrest that the posters had caused: "If you ask me," he said, "all universities are going to need a customer services department before long." And there it was, plain and simple, the issue that I hadn't been able to articulate: these young people weren't behaving like university students, they were behaving like customers.

Later, I spoke to a colleague from a university I used to work at – he had experienced the same thing. "They seem to think they are buying a degree, rather than working for it," he said. Learning has shifted, we realised, from an intellectual achievement to a commodity.

We compared notes. He gave an account of a student who had requested a tutorial at 8pm, because his office hours of 9-11am were not convenient – and because he had missed two hours of lectures at the start of term due to illness, he was effectively in debt to her. This young woman had calculated that my colleague's absence had cost her £160 worth of learning and decided that the recuperation of this time should take place when it suited her most.

I recalled the student who told me he was disappointed with his low grade because he had "paid so much money". My colleague topped it: when one of his students was asked to leave a seminar for not completing the reading, they retorted: "I pay you to teach me what's in the article, not the other way around."

Last week I sent out the first round of grades for a module and had 12 emails of complaint within an hour. One in particular stood out for its misunderstanding of what it means to be a scholar. The student said the grade must be incorrect because he had turned up to all the lectures – as if simply regurgitating what I had taught him deserved a 70+ grade.

As I attempted to formulate a diplomatic, polite and supportive response, I pondered a few things. When did it become an expectation that turning up to lectures is worthy of reward in itself? Moreover, when I was studying would I have ever had the balls to contact my lecturers and not only question their ability to grade my work appropriately but imply that my low grade was their fault?

I find that as the year progresses, my students become increasingly reluctant to engage in any academic behaviour that does not impact directly on their assignment grade. That is, after all, what they are paying for. And so I am not regarded as an academic. I am not an expert in my field, a practitioner with 10 years' worth of industry knowledge. I am a service provider.

I wish I'd had the gusto to reply to those posters. "Hey student – all I'm asking for is a little respect, seeing as how much you pay makes no difference to my wages, yet the level of support I am forced to offer you takes up 80% of my time despite the fact that teaching still only equates to 33% of my workload. But I'll be in the office until 9pm anyway because if I don't publish two papers by the end of the year, I'll be fired". Good job I thought better of it.

Trust in media is a matter of 'factpinion'

Rex Huppke, *Chicago Tribune*, April 18, 2016

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/huppke/ct-trust-news-media-huppke-20160418-story.html>

I read a story over the weekend about how trust in the news media is perilously low, right down there with Congress and the accuracy of fortune cookies.

Only 6 percent of people truly trust the media, according to a study by the Media Insight Project, a partnership of The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and the American Press Institute.

10 I was about to be sad about that, but then I thought: Consider the source. The story was written by The Associated Press, a stalwart member of the lamestream media and one of the organizations involved in this "study."

The whole thing sounded fishy.

15 When something I read or watch on television doesn't jibe with what I believe to be true, I assume the information has been manipulated by powerful left-wing or right-wing forces hell-bent on doing me and my family harm.

And then I do what all sensible, modern-day Americans do: find another source that tells me the information I want to hear.

20 For example, there's an allegation that President Barack Obama spent \$4 million in legal fees to keep his college records sealed. Mainstream media fact-checkers have examined that claim and found it to be completely unfounded, but a simple Google search reveals a slew of articles and blog posts stating the allegation as fact.

So if I want to believe Obama spent millions hiding nefarious details of his collegiate past, I go with the bloggers and right-wing news outlets while calling the fact-checkers "liberal vermin fact-checkers." If I want to believe the story is nonsense, I stick with the fact-checkers and the actual facts.

25 Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, in an effort to deflect concerns about her ties to Wall Street, recently claimed she's the only candidate being attacked by "Wall Street financiers and hedge fund managers."

The fact-checking group PolitiFact described that claim as "preposterous" and presented evidence of Wall Street-backed attack ads on several other candidates.

30 Again, you can trust Clinton because you like her and don't want to believe she's lying — just reassure yourself that the media is always out to get her. Or you can believe the fact-checkers who, in this case, Clinton's detractors would call "authoritative fact analysts" instead of liberal vermin fact-checkers.

Which brings me back to this undoubtedly false AP report about people not trusting the news media.

35 I've long felt that the news media have it out for the news media. How else do you explain a newspaper's willingness to run corrections? Nobody in their right mind admits mistakes anymore. And if you admit that you make mistakes, how am I ever supposed to trust you again?

Clearly, the AP's article is false, as proved by the fact that I don't want it to be true. All I needed to buttress my "factpinion" was to find an article on the Internet that says most people trust and have great love and affection for the news media.

40 Sadly, such an article didn't seem to exist. (I assume it was deleted by the overreaching zealots at the AP.)

Not to worry. The column I'm presently writing, once it appears on the Internet, will provide all the evidence I need.

45 To that end, allow me to state unequivocally that the level of trust the American people have in the news media has never been higher. In fact, a vast majority of people believe journalists are both smart and exceptionally attractive.

The lyin' AP's alleged study also found that people are more likely to rely on news that "cites expert sources or documents." No problem.

50 According to a survey I just wrote in crayon on the inside cover of a book next to the chair I'm sitting in, a full 97 percent of Americans describe the news media as "Most. Trustworthy. Ever." Equally impressive, a full 103 percent of respondents say this survey was the most accurate they have ever taken and "you should believe it because it's really, really true — seriously."

(The survey had a margin of error of "+/- kiss my butt.")

So there you have it — the lyin' AP's egregious act of yellow journalism has been fully debunked, at least in my factpinion.

55 So go ahead and trust the news media.

Or don't trust the news media.

The truth is that in a world replete with information, people are finding whatever truths they want to believe. And that renders trust a bygone emotion. At least according to my survey.

Commentary: Why women should vote for Hillary Clinton

Nancy L. Cohen, *Chicago Tribune*, April 6, 2016

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/commentary/ct-why-women-should-vote-for-hillary-clinton-20160406-story.html>

Sexism is driving women away from the GOP front-runner Donald Trump and the Republican Party, potentially providing a windfall to Hillary Clinton in a general election. But to ride women's discontent into the Oval Office, of course, Clinton has to win the Democratic nomination. And while she has maintained a strong advantage with women voters overall, she's not doing well with all women. White millennial women favor Bernie Sanders.

Perhaps that's because the best rationale for Clinton's candidacy hasn't been effectively communicated to millennial women. There is a powerful case to be made for electing a woman president, and it has nothing to do with the straw man of identity politics.

The most compelling reason women should vote for Hillary Clinton? Pure self-interest.

The global scholarship leaves no doubt: Women in political office make it a priority to advance rights, equality and opportunity for women and girls, in a way and to a degree that men in power overwhelmingly do not.

A large body of research has been devoted to answering a fundamental question: Do women substantively represent women more effectively than men do? In hundreds of studies examining large data sets of roll call votes, bill sponsorship, laws enacted and other measures the answer is clear. "Across time, office, and political parties," political scientist Beth Reingold writes in a comprehensive review, "women, more often than men, take the lead on women's issues, no matter how such issues are defined."

Consider just a handful of these studies. Georgetown University's Michele Swers has found, among other things, that both Democratic and moderate Republican women in Congress have been more likely than men in either party to advance legislation on child care and domestic violence. Even when men and women in the same party hold similar opinions — on reproductive health issues, for example — it is the women officeholders who step up. This is particularly clear at the state level, where legislatures with more women have passed fewer abortion restrictions. Another study analyzed every instance in which a U.S. House seat switched between a woman and man between 1973 and 2002. Controlling for multiple factors, the model generated by that analysis predicts that Democratic and Republican women will offer three times more feminist bills than their male counterparts will.

It's much the same in other nations. An analysis of 31 countries (including the United States) found a statistically significant relationship: the higher the proportion of women lawmakers, the greater the number of laws enacted to advance gender equality. Jennifer Piscopo, an Occidental College political scientist, examined 18,700 bills introduced in Argentina's lower house over a 10-year period and found that nearly three-quarters of women's rights bills were written by women.

Such findings don't mean that all female officeholders seek to advance women's rights, or that women govern only from the standpoint of gender. But the research does speak strongly to the fact that women and men in power have different priorities.

And then there's the danger that if women aren't at the table, they might be on the menu. In late 2009, the all-male Senate Democratic leadership team met privately to decide what would be included in the final Affordable Care Act. They eliminated a women's healthcare amendment that had passed overwhelmingly in committee, and that included coverage for such things as contraceptives and mammograms. The amendment's sponsor, Sen. Barbara A. Mikulski (D-Md.), had to demand its reinstatement just as the caucus was about to vote on the final bill.

"You have to include the women," she told then-majority leader Sen. Harry Reid (D-Nev.). Had she not stood her ground, with the support of other women senators, the interests of 51 percent of the population would have been sacrificed in the most consequential piece of legislation in a generation.

The scholarship, and anecdotal evidence like Mikulski's story, argues that women should take their distinctive interests and concerns as women into account when they decide how to vote. But we don't often hear about the interest-based case for electing women.

Certainly part of the explanation is that women voters care about many issues, not just "women's issues." Still, their aversion to explicitly advocating for themselves, I suspect, stems from fear of being labeled selfish. From childhood, women imbibe the notion that selfishness, like ambition, make them unlikable and untrustworthy. This may be part of how we get to a moment in which white working-class men's overwhelming support for Donald Trump or Bernie Sanders is called a "movement," while women's support for Clinton is dismissed as touchy-feely "identity politics."

The U. S. has made tremendous advances on equal rights over the last 40 years, and yet we have a ways to go. Women are paid less than men in almost every job and at every level. Ours is the only advanced economy that doesn't guarantee paid leave for new mothers. On broad measures of gender equality, the United States ranks an unimpressive 28th in the world.

To achieve equal opportunity and full participation for women and girls in all areas of American life demands leadership, dedication and political will — and especially the will to expend political capital — at the top.

All the evidence tells us that our odds of making progress on gender equality will be much higher if the president is a woman.

Commentary: Why the transgender bathroom wars matter

Heather Wilhelm *Chicago Tribune*, April 14, 2016

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/commentary/ct-wilhelm-transgender-perspec-0415-20160414-story.html>

Decades ago, when Americans imagined 2016, hopeful citizens visualized groovy innovations like widely available personal jetpacks, easily accessible moon bases and "futuristic" fashion trends that looked suspiciously like neon 1980s clothing coated with Saran Wrap. So far, 2016 has brought us none of these delightful novelties, but it has delivered a series of depressing public bathroom wars.

Three weeks ago, North Carolina Gov. Pat McCrory signed a now-infamous "bathroom bill," a law that, among other things, restricts access to public restrooms based on the sex users were assigned at birth. The bill, which was cobbled together after 12 hours in an emergency session, came as a response to a Charlotte, N.C., ordinance that declared gender identity, not biological sex, as the standard-bearer for proper bathroom entry.

As you might have guessed, a flame war promptly ensued. PayPal, a company that happily does business in Singapore — a country that literally outlaws being gay — denounced North Carolina and loudly axed 400 new jobs in Charlotte. Deutsche Bank followed suit, killing its plans for 250 new jobs near Raleigh. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, at least 100 other companies have expressed their disdain for the bill.

In protest, gravel-voiced "hard knocks" crabby man Bruce Springsteen, apparently trying to relive his own glory days, deep-sixed an upcoming concert in Greensboro. Meanwhile, Bryan Adams, a musician who doubles as a living '80s time capsule, righteously canceled a show in Mississippi — the state recently passed a similar law — perhaps forgetting, due to his age, that he had recently played in gay-hostile Egypt.

The bill, to be fair, was something of a mess. This week, McCrory issued an executive order expanding the state's equal employment policy to cover sexual orientation; he also asked the state legislature to amend a section dealing with citizens' rights to sue in state court. But the controversial bathroom section — declaring that, when it comes to public facilities, biological men at birth go into the men's room, biological women at birth go into the women's — remained. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, at least 13 other states are considering similar legislation.

Interviewed by *The Wall Street Journal*, McCrory seemed baffled at the bathroom backlash. "Who would've thought?" he said. "I can't believe we're talking about this." Indeed, in a world where Islamic State is expanding into Europe, ghost ships full of corpses are washing into Japan from North Korea, Hillary Clinton is proposing a \$1 trillion tax increase, and people are still paying good money to see Bruce Springsteen, it seems ludicrous to obsess about bathrooms.

So why can't we just live and let live? Bathroom law opponents "are crusading against a tiny minority that poses no real threat," Jillian T. Weiss, a transgender rights lawyer and activist, wrote in Wednesday's USA Today. In a way, she's correct: Demonizing transgender people is unfair in any light. But Weiss also misses the bigger picture behind the bathroom brouhaha. It's not a fight against people. It's a fight about reality, and whether or not the government can dictate a certain version of it. Ultimately, it's a fight about freedom of thought.

America's burgeoning bathroom wars, so silly and banal on the surface, are actually quite deep: They fling together two conflicting, wildly incompatible streams of thought. On the transgender side, identity is everything. If gender is truly fluid, and yet truly knowable, then the denial of one's gender identity is a hurtful denial of one's very being or self.

This is also why the bathroom issue provides such a massive spark point: If the government agrees that trans men and women can access the bathrooms of their choice, they are officially validating the view that gender is no more than what you feel or believe it to be. They are ruling this view, in their own way, a fact — and if it's a fact, can anyone really rightfully disagree?

Last week, novelist Ian McEwan learned the consequences of thought crime the hard way. "The self, like a consumer desirable, may be plucked from the shelves of a personal identity supermarket, a ready-to-wear little black number," he told an audience. "Call me old-fashioned, but I tend to think of people with penises as men."

You can probably guess what happened next — and that McEwan was bullied into backtracking.

Unfortunately, the bathroom wars are likely just getting started. The Obama administration has already chosen sides. "This is a good illustration that the fight for civil rights is not over," White House press secretary Josh Earnest said of the North Carolina law. "The president, every time, is going to be on the side of equality and fairness and justice for every American."

That sounds great, unless you're an American with traditional views on gender, your kids are in a public school, and the girls' locker room has just been declared a gender-fluid zone. Alas, my friend; you simply have the wrong thoughts. Sadly, in some cases, that's when "equality and fairness and justice" don't really apply.

Heather Wilhelm is a writer based in Austin, Texas.

Nicola Sturgeon: Scots to be allowed to change gender so they are neither male nor female

The Daily Telegraph, 31 MARCH 2016

Scottish adults and children could be allowed to legally change their gender without any medical diagnosis or treatment and decide they are neither men nor women, under an overhaul of the law promised by Nicola Sturgeon.

The First Minister said that one of her top priorities if she wins May's Holyrood elections will be to review Scotland's gender recognition laws to ensure they are in line with "international best practice".

Campaigners said this would mean allowing Scots to change the gender on their birth certificate using a simple self-declaration that they consider themselves to be of the opposite sex. Children under 16 would also be allowed to do this but would require the permission of their parents.

In addition, the law would recognise that some people have a "non-binary gender", meaning they would legally be neither men nor a woman and could change documents such as birth and marriage certificates and passports to reflect that.

Ms Sturgeon also announced plans to make sure all children were taught about tolerance to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and inter-sex (LGBTI) people "throughout early years, primary and secondary education". But the Free Church of Scotland the "SNP are now seeking to destroy the traditional idea of gender" and warned it would result in "confusion and brokenness amongst our children."

It is estimated there are more than 10,000 people in Scotland are transgender, which means their gender identity is not the same as their assigned sex. They do not need to have undergone any surgery or to have taken any drugs to change their bodies to be classified as such.

If they want to legally change their sex, currently they have to undergo detailed psychiatric tests to confirm they have been diagnosed with "gender dysphoria" and an assessment has to be made of how that diagnosis was determined and of any treatment they received.

Ms Sturgeon told a LGBTI election hustings with Holyrood's five party leaders in Edinburgh "it was time" for a review of gender identity law.

The First Minister said "greater recognition and greater protection" was needed for people who do not identify as a man or a woman. She added: "That, I think, has got to be one of the priorities of the next parliament."

Ms Sturgeon said she wanted non-binary gender to be legally recognised by 2021, saying: "It think it's no longer in this day and age appropriate for people not to have their perfectly legitimate identity recognised legally."

Outlining the SNP's equality pledges ahead of the event, she said: "Enabling young people to make informed choices about their gender and sexual identity is about supporting them to be themselves so that they might fulfil their potential."

"I am hopeful that in the next Scottish Parliament, we can build as much consensus on LGBTI issues as we did in this session – and take another leap forward for equality."

As well as children being taught to respect LGBTI people from their earliest education, she said "every professional working with children" would be trained on equality to prevent bullying and help child development.

Kezia Dugdale, the Scottish Labour leader, told the hustings an overhaul of gender recognition laws would be also be included in her party's election manifesto.

Ruth Davidson, the Scottish Tory leader, said she had "no philosophical objection" to a new category of gender being created on British passports, saying: "Let's do it."

But Rev David Robertson, Moderator of the Free Church of Scotland, said: "We ask does Nicola Sturgeon and her Government now accept that there are not two genders, male and female, but many genders?"

"Not content with the destruction of the traditional Christian ideas of sexuality and marriage, it appears as though the SNP are now seeking to destroy the traditional idea of gender."

He added: "The SNP seem to be working on the unproven and somewhat bizarre notion that children get to choose their own gender and sexuality. We believe that this will result in confusion and brokenness amongst our children rather than fulfilled potential."

James Morton, manager of the Scottish Transgender Alliance, said the group was "very pleased" with the review. He said: "That would mean enabling people to change the gender on their birth certificate without intrusive medical diagnosis, recognising trans people as the experts on their own identities."

"It would allow young people to legally change their gender, with parents' support if under 16. It would also mean the law recognising that some people have a non-binary gender, that is they are neither men nor women."

He said countries such as Australia, New Zealand and India already allow gender-neutral birth certificates and passports, with the letter 'X' in the box next to the gender field instead of 'M' or 'F'.

Devolving tax powers benefits Scotland more than the rest of Britain but may do little to keep the union together

The Economist, Apr 9th 2016

- 5 SCOTLAND is fast becoming one of the world's most powerful subnational states, along with Canadian provinces and Swiss cantons. It is now adding significant control over fiscal policy, in particular income tax, to the substantial autonomy it has enjoyed since 1999. The devolution deal, hastily concluded by an alarmed British government when only 55% of Scots voted in 2014 against independence, favours Scottish taxpayers over those in the rest of Britain. Even so it may only whet the appetite for full sovereignty.
- 10 Traditionally the British Treasury has collected revenues in Scotland, as elsewhere, and handed the Scottish government a slug of money, the "block grant", to finance most of its spending. On April 6th a new Scottish rate of income tax (SRIT) was introduced that will take ten pence from every pound subject to income taxes. Scottish taxes due to Westminster have been correspondingly reduced. Scotland will keep the revenue from its new tax band, but its grant will be smaller. Next year Scotland will gain full control over income tax, collecting roughly
- 15 half the money it spends, and the grant will shrink further. Other powers are also being devolved, including more say on welfare spending and the ability to borrow a little more.
- It looks like a bad time, however, for Scotland to assume control of its fiscal destiny. The effects of lower world prices for oil and gas, exports of which accounted for one-quarter of Scotland's GDP in 2012, may worsen in 2016, as contracts for fabricating and maintaining oil rigs expire and are not renewed. Forthcoming revisions
- 20 could show that the Scottish economy contracted in the fourth quarter of 2015.
- In the area around Inverness, Scotland's biggest oil region after Aberdeen, unemployment has risen for five straight months. The Port of Cromarty Firth, where rigs are stored when they are not needed in the North Sea, is jammed (see picture). Diversifying into renewable energy and tourism will not offset job losses in oil. Pay packets in the industry are about 50% above the British average, so having fewer to tax takes a big bite out of
- 25 receipts.
- The fine print of the devolution agreement should help the Scots to cope with a slowing economy, however. The British government cut Scotland a sweet deal. Though the Scottish government is now in charge of a chunk of income tax, it will not run any economic risk in 2016-17, says Jim Gallagher of Oxford University. The reduction in the block grant will exactly offset the tax receipts generated this year by SRIT, he says. If revenues are low,
- 30 London will make up the difference.
- Scotland will take on much more risk when it gets full control over income tax in April 2017, but the fine print of the deal may still mitigate it. Scotland's income-tax take in 2016-17 will help to determine how big a block grant it receives thereafter. If the economy performs badly this year, the grant next year will be more generous. If growth then bounces back, Scotland could find itself with both juicy tax receipts and a hefty handout from
- 35 London.
- The way in which the block grant will be adjusted in future years is also to Scotland's advantage. Its population is growing much more slowly than Britain's. Revenues from income tax can be expected to grow more slowly too, and so can demand for public services.
- Some argue that any adjustment to the block grant should take into account Scotland's diminishing need for cash
- 40 relative to needs elsewhere in Britain. In fact its budget will be protected from its relatively lower population growth—precisely what the ruling Scottish National Party (SNP) was aiming for in the negotiations over devolution. Public spending per person in Scotland is already more than 10% higher than it is in Britain as a whole, though Scotland is not particularly impoverished. The deal ensures that it is unlikely to decline toward the British average, says Mr Gallagher.
- 45 This latest round of devolution comes at an interesting time. The government at Holyrood is controlled by the SNP, which advocates independence, lost the referendum on it and went on to stunning victory in the British general election in 2015. It now hopes to do as well in the Scottish elections scheduled for May 5th.
- One view is that the new tax powers could weaken the SNP. Since 2011, and especially since the referendum, it has built a sprawling coalition of support by bashing London and the British government's austerity policies,
- 50 combining left-wing rhetoric with middle-class goodies. Its opponents hope the transfer of fiscal powers will make it harder for the SNP to disavow responsibility for Scotland's problems and promise all things to all people. That, in turn, might dampen popular enthusiasm for independence.
- Some evidence points this way. Tax, not independence, has dominated the election campaign, with Labour seeking to outflank the SNP on the left (pledging tax rises to pay for expanded services) and the Conservatives on
- 55 the right (hinting at cuts). Some think Scotland's move towards fiscal autonomy—on generous terms—will convince people that full independence is neither necessary nor desirable.

Students must not let George Osborne and the Tories destroy Britain's higher education system

The Independent, Thursday 8 October 2015

5 The Tories' emergency Budget in July was an open attack on young people. In it, George Osborne announced the scrapping of maintenance grants for the poorest students. Unsurprisingly – although facing stiff competition – this attack went down as one of the most regressive and least popular policies of the Budget. Straight away, 52 per cent of the public said they opposed the policy.

10 That 52 per cent were spot on. Because the grants will be replaced with loans, these cuts will put the poorest students in the most debt – and it isn't just student campaigners who say so. The Institute for Fiscal Studies says: "This means that students from the poorest backgrounds are now likely to leave university owing substantially more to the Government than their better-off peers."

15 The student movement now faces its best chance for a victory since 2010. A national mobilisation is underway for a huge national student demonstration on 4 November, and there is a sense on campuses around the country that students know they can win. Grant cuts are so unpopular, and so obviously unfair, that if a big campaign emerges, the Government will be under huge pressure – and will have to start backing down. But if Osborne is successful in scrapping grants, those who previously received full maintenance grants will leave university owing £53,000, whereas better-off students will owe only £40,500. This comes at a time when repayment conditions on our loans are changing, meaning students are going to have to pay back more of their debt earlier and on lower incomes.

20 What does that mean in practice? Well, if students with a household income below £42,000 want to access university education, they will have to take on more debt than their richer peers and then spend longer paying it off. National Union of Students (NUS) research indicates 52 per cent of those in receipt of a maintenance grant felt it was absolutely essential to their attendance at university.

25 We can't tell what impact these changes will have before they are made, but there is potential for grant cuts to seriously reduce the number of students from less wealthy backgrounds going to university. At the very least, it will force students from low income backgrounds to accept colossal amounts of debt.

Seen in broad perspective, this is just an extension of the Tory agenda that began by trebling tuition fees to £9,000. But the student movement is making a different argument now than it did when that happened in 2010. 30 We've spent the years since the tuition fees increase not only criticising cuts, but also proposing what a new, free education system could look like.

The NCAFC has also confirmed the route the demonstration will take through London. We've been winning the argument for public funding of education on campus. It was the focus of last year's 10,000 strong national demonstration, and the NUS finally came round to supporting free education at its national 35 conference in 2014. What's more, the Corbyn campaign made it a major plank of its policy offering to young people by proposing to fund free education at university level through a 2.5 per cent increase in corporation tax. We've also been focusing on the broader definition of 'free' education. Students have led the way in fighting against police and state repression on campuses, opposing the Prevent agenda and police brutality against student protesters. They've demanded the decolonisation of the curriculum, and decent housing for all students.

40 Our movement is no longer simply about a negative reaction to austerity: we want more than that. We know where the education system needs go, and we're willing to fight to take it there.

It might seem strange to some that, after Corbyn's victory, we are going back to the streets. But in reality, a newly left wing Labour Party will never win without social movements changing the conversation and putting pressure on the Government.

45 The momentum of Corbyn's victory now needs to be used to meaningfully challenge the aggressive Conservative agenda before the 2020 general election. If we watch and wait as grants are cut, the NHS is privatised, benefits caps are introduced, and tax credits are withdrawn, the public is likely to be too demoralised and desperate to be able to fight.

50 It's not enough to hope for Corbyn to do some good at some point in the future. Our society is in crisis now, and so we have to act now. For students, this means mobilising around grants – and the demonstration on 4 November must be huge.

George Osborne and the Tory government think they can destroy the education system. It's time for students to prove them wrong.

Faith schools 'are failing to comply with pupil admissions rules'

Study finds the vast majority of schools ask parents too intrusive questions about their church backgrounds

Richard Garner, Education Editor, *The Independent*, Thursday 1 October 2015

The vast majority of state faith schools are failing to comply with rules governing pupil admissions, according to a major study. Most are in breach of the law by asking parents too intrusive questions about their church backgrounds or failing to give priority to children in care, says the report, *An Unholy Mess*, by the British Humanist Association. Some, however, may be inadvertently in breach of the rules because governors do not understand them, it adds.

The report follows objections launched by the BHA and the pressure group, the Fair admissions Campaign, to the admissions arrangements of 44 faith schools in different parts of the country. Almost 90 per cent of the schools were found to be asking parents for information they did not need, it is claimed.

The admissions code states that schools are not allowed to require parents to financially or practically support any organisation connected to the church on question. They must also give priority to looked after children in care. However, the report concluded: "Almost 90 per cent of schools were found to be asking for information from parents that they did not need."

These included "asking for details of religious observance in a different or more detailed way than was required" for the admissions code.

"Some schools asked for parents' birth certificates, for applicants country of origin, whether they were UK nationals, whether the spoke English as an additional language and if they had any medical issues," it added. "It said there were "widespread issues with clarity, fairness and objectivity" with 85 per cent of schools failing to publish their admissions criteria in time for appeals into the refusal of a school place.

The issue of admissions to faith schools has been a source of controversy for years with many parents - aware they might be quizzed on church attendance - feigning allegiance to a particular church and turning up regularly on Sundays before governors decided on whether to admit their child.

However, the report asserts that those questions are out of order - and calls on the Government to move towards banning all faith schools from selecting pupils on faith grounds.

It also calls for the admissions code to be reviewed - and the setting up of an independent monitoring body to check the rules are being adhered to.

"When a system makes criminals out of schools, liars out of parents and, in the midst of it all, a lot of children get left behind, it is time for reform," said Andrew Copson, chief executive of the British Humanist Association. "It is clearly the case ... that none of the problems that we have identified can be entirely solved unless religious selection is abandoned altogether."

Attempts to curb selection by faith were introduced by former Education Secretary Michael Gove - who insisted that free schools should only be able to admit 50 per cent of their pupils by faith.

Research commissioned by the BHA two years ago revealed that overall - 72 per cent of places at faith schools were determined by faith.

Professor Ted Cantle, author of a government review of community cohesion following the race riots in northern cities in 2001, said of the report: "We recommended that all schools should consider ways in which they might ensure that their intake is representative of the range of cultures and ethnicity in their local communities.

"School admissions policies are letting down parents, carers and children ... It is time for change."

Dr Jonathan Romain, chairman of Accord - which campaigns for equal access to faith schools, said; "At last we have authoritative confirmation that the countless anecdotes about religious discrimination by faith schools are based on fact.

"It means that they can no longer be dismissed and the systematic malpractices have to be confronted.

"How sad that faith and discrimination seem to be firm friends when they should be enemies."

A spokeswoman for the Department for Education added; "We want every child to have access to the best school possible and where there is evidence a school does not have fair and transparent admissions arrangements swift action will be taken.

"We will consider the findings of the BHA's report carefully."

Criminalising people for thinking bad thoughts spreads extremism

Haras Rafiq, *The Independent*, 18 May 2016

This week's Queen's Speech made a pithy reference to the Government's commitment to tackling radicalisation: "Legislation will be introduced to prevent radicalisation, tackle extremism in all its forms, and promote community integration." Fleeting though it was, this declaration is far from innocuous. It is the firing of the pistol at the start of what is to be a potentially disastrous phase in the battle against hardline ideologies.

Much of what we know of the content in the new Counter Extremism Bill is, on the face of it, to be applauded. The Government has hinted at new powers which will safeguard children from extremist preachers and teachers, putting this duty of care alongside that of sex offenders, serial drug offenders and criminal records. This is sensible and long overdue.

It may also consult on new powers to enable it to intervene "where councils fail to tackle extremism", in the wake of the Trojan horse scandal. All of this is perfectly workable.

But there is another, more disturbing, aspect of the bill which must undergo our scrutiny and, I hope, opposition: the introduction of banning orders.

These "extremism banning/disruption orders" would not criminalise the act of hate speech or promotion of terrorism – they are, of course, already illegal under the Terrorism Act 2006 – but instead criminalise the intent to spread hate speech or promote terrorism, if ministers reasonably believed that to be the case.

These orders target those who operate in what the police now call the "pre-criminal space", expanding the definition of people who could be incarcerated from those who do bad things, to those who think bad things.

You're a criminal if you think bad things? We should shudder at this kind of Orwellian dictum.

Do banning orders help us defeat extremism? Most certainly not. The absolute cornerstone of liberal democratic society is the right to free speech. This aspect of the bill – together with a broader trend of UK institutions such as universities, attempting to simply forbid irritating or offensive views – is a very dangerous precedent.

Bigotry cannot be legislated out of existence or banned; it is ludicrous to think that it could. In defeating extremist views, we must do everything possible not to become as totalitarian as the totalitarian ideologies we are seeking to dismantle.

You cannot defeat ideas and you cannot pretend they are not there. What you can do is deconstruct them, emotionally and intellectually, and let the audience decide.

Take, for example, the British National Party (BNP). As social justice warriors triggered, screamed and raged about the national disgrace of having Nick Griffin on the BBC politics show Question Time, his fellow panellists and the wider British public prepared to confront him.

Just months after Griffin's television appearance, the BNP was effectively stripped and rendered intellectually bankrupt – all because they were brought out into the open and challenged. The people saw, the people judged, and the people destroyed them.

We must do the same with all elements of extremism. Arbitrary bans force them underground and into darker manifestations, but fighting them in the open allows us to bring to bear all of our critical faculties and dismantle their arguments.

That is why it is so crucial that we rally around and invest in opposition groups who are ready and willing to take extremism on in the open.

We cannot legislate our way out of this, just as we can't securitise our way out of terrorism. We need a counter cultural insurgency to sweep these people off their feet and blast them into irrelevance.

History will not remember us fondly if we continue to tacitly allow extremism to flourish in the name of political correctness and history will positively condemn us if we, the liberal democratic west, attempt to shut down debate and ban ideas. We cannot feed the victimhood, 'nanny state' agenda any further.

By banning viewpoints, create a 'forbidden fruit' syndrome, where charismatic recruiters can sweep in and drum up hatred. We at Quilliam know this to be true: many of us once subscribed to hard-line ideologies and relished every opportunity we saw when the Governments clumsy reforms and bureaucracy crashed down. It gave us the ammunition and reasons to justify our resistance and fire to our cause.

And it is for that reasons that we must pressure the Government to amend the current version of the Counter Extremism Bill.

Political leadership is impossible in the age of social media - as Jeremy Corbyn has found

The Independent, Monday 7 December 2015

The way we communicate now threatens the existence of the old political parties. On the one hand, there are the two vast UK governing parties, each supposedly bound together by common values and policies. On the other there is Twitter.

If there is a word out of place from a leader, or a leader's critics, the Twitterati leap. The pace of politics has speeded up beyond recognition. An internal spat can become a noisy, uncontrollable civil war within seconds. The last two highly charged shadow cabinet meetings relating to the thorny issue of Syria were not only reported on Twitter and the rolling news TV channels before they had even ended, but, in a surreal manner, their outcomes were also determined by reports of what was happening.

At one frontbench gathering a week before the Commons vote on whether to bomb Syria, Jeremy Corbyn had told his frontbenchers that they should consult with party members before deciding on their position the following week. As shadow cabinet members left the meeting they discovered on Twitter that Corbyn was to email party members declaring his opposition to military action. Some of them were furious at such a pre-emptive strike. But Corbyn's advisers only acted speedily because they had seen Hilary Benn on Sky News supporting military action. They wanted to get their side of the argument out there too. Before rolling news and social media, there were no platforms for such open, vivid and immediate internal conflict.

As the next follow-up shadow cabinet meeting began on the eve of the Syria debate, a senior political journalist tweeted that Corbyn would offer a free vote but also insist party policy was to oppose the air strikes. The journalist had been briefed by Corbyn's office. During the meeting the shadow cabinet members read the journalist's tweet on their phones and became furious again. Corbyn had to give way and agree that opposition to air strikes was not party policy. The tweet reporting Corbyn's intentions was accurate, but then became inaccurate because frontbenchers were apoplectic having read the tweet during the meeting.

The dissenters were active too. Tweets from informed journalists and the rolling news channels were reporting the twists and turns of the shadow cabinet meetings before they had finished. Within minutes of the meetings ending, detailed blogs were published with vivid accounts of what had happened – who had his head in his hands, who had protested most angrily.

In response to the blogs, Corbyn's office briefed accounts that were also tweeted and blogged. All hell was breaking loose at an uncontrollable speed. Again none of it could have happened at such mind-boggling, nerve-shredding, panic-inducing speed without texts, Twitter and blogging.

In the summer of 1994 I wrote a paper for Reuters and the BBC looking at the internal crises fracturing John Major's government compared with Harold Wilson's vulnerability in the late 1960s. I showed that the dance between the newspapers and the growing number of broadcasting outlets in the mid-Nineties made it much harder for Major to govern or lead his party.

In 1968 Wilson was fragile, but the media storms were nowhere near as intense for him as they were for Major. Sometimes the plots against Wilson at the top of the Labour Party made the inside pages of the broadsheets but were rarely on the front. There were only a tiny number of broadcasting outlets inviting dissenters to appear, so the critics were not on public view. In contrast, by 1994 there were lots of programmes seeking Major's critics to speak out. Major's supporters felt compelled to respond on other outlets, the newspapers reported the clash between the two sides, and the broadcasters followed up the front pages the next day with more interviews. I followed in detail one sequence that began when the then Home Secretary, Michael Howard, innocently noted during an interview that there was a case for a referendum on the euro. Howard made his comments on the Saturday Today programme. I know for certain he had not intended to provoke another round of the civil war but, by the following Wednesday, Newsnight opened with a shot of No 10 and Jeremy Paxman asking "Will John Major still be in Downing Street by the end of the week?"

He was in Downing Street for another three years, but they were years of hell as broadcasters and newspapers fuelled a crisis, rather than merely reporting it.

The mid-Nineties seems like an innocent age now. Indeed, the New Labour era is distant history too – the age of control freakery and message discipline. The dance between the BBC and newspapers back then was all about Labour "spin". In their confused way, both the BBC and the newspapers were opposed to Labour's controlling tendencies, demanding more candour and openness. Now they have the wild openness of Corbyn's Labour Party and a looming Tory split over Europe and yet insist that only united, disciplined parties win elections.

Tubman replacing Jackson on the \$20 a deeply symbolic move

Deepti Hajela Associated Press April 22, 2016 *The Boston Globe*

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/news/nation/2016/04/21/tubman-replacing-jackson-deeply-symbolic-move/QhdPPi27j9r4TCatJle5LK/story.html>

NEW YORK — Growing up in Oklahoma, Becky Hobbs noticed some of her Cherokee elders wouldn't even touch a \$20 bill because they so despised Andrew Jackson. To this day, the 66-year-old songwriter pokes him in the face whenever she gets one.

For Hobbs and many other Native Americans, the US Treasury's decision to replace Jackson's portrait with Harriet Tubman's is an immensely meaningful change.

The contrast between the two historical figures is stark: He was a slave-owning president who forced 10 Cherokees and many other tribal nations on deadly marches out of their southern homelands; she was an African-American abolitionist who risked her life to free others. Their swap on the bill is unprecedented.

"We're just thrilled that Andrew Jackson has had a removal of his own," said Hobbs. "The constant reminder of Andrew Jackson being glorified is sad and sickening to our people."

The Obama administration's decision is groundbreaking in many ways — there hasn't been a woman on 15 paper money in over a century, and there's never been an African-American.

Change also is coming to other bills: The history-making appearances of Martin Luther King Jr., and opera singer Marian Anderson at the Lincoln Memorial will be displayed on the back of the \$5 bill, and an image of suffragettes marching for the right of women to vote will be on the back of the \$10 bill.

But Tubman's arrival is the one many people have been hoping for, much to the dismay of Jackson 20 supporters, and it comes amid ongoing, emotional debates about other symbols Americans choose to honor, such as the Confederate flags and statues being removed from public life in places across the South.

"Every time you pick up that \$20 bill, it's a reminder that we can't ignore or pretend like we didn't have 400 years of slavery," said Amrita Myers, a historian at Indiana University who focuses on 19th century black women. "Not only is this going to be the first African-American historical figure on US currency, but it's a 25 woman specifically from the era of slavery," Myers explained. "We still live in a nation that doesn't like to acknowledge its history of racial and gender oppression. Black women experience those things simultaneously."

Making the change on currency is especially powerful, said Suzan Shown Harjo, president of the Morning 30 Star Institute, a native rights organization. "A country usually puts forward its best when it shows the world the people on a stamp or on money," said Harjo, who is both Cheyenne and Muskogee. "They're really saying, 'this is what we want you to think of us ... these are our best people.'"

Compared to all his predecessors, Jackson, who served from 1828-1836, arrived at the White House as a self-made everyman whose populist message resonated with a country still solidifying its democracy a half-century after declaring independence. But for Native Americans, Jackson stands for genocide — the polar 35 opposite of a unifying figure.

"He's not the poster boy for America, and it's good to see it changed," said Bill John Baker, principal chief of the Cherokee Nation.

Baker points out that a fourth of the Cherokees died after Jackson and his troops forced them onto what became known as the Trail of Tears. Other tribes forced to move to reservations in Oklahoma and beyond 40 include the Seminoles, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Muscogee-Creek.

Many Americans celebrate Jackson for his victory over the British during the War of 1812. General Jackson then orchestrated the invasion of Florida in 1818 and persuaded the Spanish government a year later to give up the territory. Along the way, he fought Native Americans — although some were his allies for brief periods — and his 1830 Indian Removal Act expanded US territory at a critical time.

45 "As horrible a policy as it was, it was something that was widely appreciated by many voters at the time," said Andrew Frank, a historian at Florida State University.

In 1928 — the centennial of his election — Jackson's legacy was honored by placing him on the \$20 bill. Nearly a century later, GOP presidential front-runner Donald Trump wants to keep it that way.

Trump said replacing Jackson with Tubman is "pure political correctness." He suggested putting Tubman on 50 the \$2 bill instead.

"We won't stop promoting his legacy," said Howard Kittell, chief executive of the Andrew Jackson Foundation, which operates Jackson's historic home, The Hermitage, in Tennessee. "He's a complicated guy, especially when you look at him and assess him from a perspective of 20th century values. We don't try to varnish over the fact that he was a slaveholder and helped push the Indian Removal Act through Congress. 55 But within his historical period, that was within the mainstream thinking." Ed Baptist, history professor at Cornell University, disagrees: "At the time, there were alternatives, there were congressmen who suggested alternatives. The Indian Removal Act was contested, there were lots of folks who opposed it. "Harriet Tubman is what's good about America," Baptist said. "Andrew Jackson is what's problematic about our history."

Why Precisely Is Bernie Sanders Against Reparations?

The Vermont senator's political imagination is active against plutocracy, but why is it so limited against white supremacy? TA-NEHISI COATES January 19, 2016 *The Atlantic*

Last week Bernie Sanders was asked whether he was in favor of "reparations for slavery." It is worth considering Sanders's response in full:

"No, I don't think so. First of all, its likelihood of getting through Congress is nil. Second of all, I think it would be very divisive. The real issue is when we look at the poverty rate among the African American community, when we look at the high unemployment rate within the African American community, we have a lot of work to do.

So I think what we should be talking about is making massive investments in rebuilding our cities, in creating millions of decent paying jobs, in making public colleges and universities tuition-free, basically targeting our federal resources to the areas where it is needed the most and where it is needed the most is in impoverished communities, often African American and Latino."

For those of us interested in how the left prioritizes its various radicalisms, Sanders's answer is illuminating. The spectacle of a socialist candidate opposing reparations as "divisive" (there are few political labels more divisive in the minds of Americans than socialist) is only rivaled by the implausibility of Sanders posing as a pragmatist. Sanders says the chance of getting reparations through Congress is "nil," a correct observation which could just as well apply to much of the Vermont senator's own platform. The chances of a President Sanders coaxing a Republican Congress to pass a \$1 trillion jobs and infrastructure bill are also nil. Considering Sanders's proposal for single-payer health care, Paul Krugman asks, "Is there any realistic prospect that a drastic overhaul could be enacted any time soon—say, in the next eight years? No."

Sanders is a lot of things, many of them good. But he is not the candidate of moderation and unification, so much as the candidate of partisanship and radicalism. There is neither insult nor accolade in this. John Brown was radical and divisive. So was Eric Robert Rudolph. Our current sprawling megapolis of prisons was a bipartisan achievement. Obamacare was not. Sometimes the moral course lies within the politically possible, and sometimes the moral course lies outside of the politically possible. One of the great functions of radical candidates is to war against equivocators and opportunists who conflate these two things. Radicals expand the political imagination and, hopefully, prevent incrementalism from becoming a virtue.

Unfortunately, Sanders's radicalism has failed in the ancient fight against white supremacy. What he proposes in lieu of reparations—job creation, investment in cities, and free higher education—is well within the Overton window, and his platform on race echoes Democratic orthodoxy. The calls for community policing, body cameras, and a voting-rights bill with pre-clearance restored—all are things that Hillary Clinton agrees with. And those positions with which she might not agree address black people not so much as a class specifically injured by white supremacy, but rather, as a group which magically suffers from disproportionate poverty.

This is the "class first" approach, originating in the myth that racism and socialism are necessarily incompatible. But raising the minimum wage doesn't really address the fact that black men without criminal records have about the same shot at low-wage work as white men with them; nor can making college free address the wage gap between black and white graduates. Housing discrimination, historical and present, may well be the fulcrum of white supremacy. Affirmative action is one of the most disputed issues of the day. Neither are addressed in the "racial justice" section of Sanders platform.

Sanders's anti-racist moderation points to a candidate who is not merely against reparations, but one who doesn't actually understand the argument. To briefly restate it, from 1619 until at least the late 1960s, American institutions, businesses, associations, and governments—federal, state, and local—repeatedly plundered black communities. Their methods included everything from land-theft, to red-lining, to disenfranchisement, to convict-lease labor, to lynching, to enslavement, to the vending of children. So large was this plunder that America, as we know it today, is simply unimaginable without it. Its great universities were founded on it. Its early economy was built by it. Its suburbs were financed by it. Its deadliest war was the result of it.

One can't evade these facts by changing the subject. Some months ago, black radicals in the Black Lives Matters movement protested Sanders. They were, in the main, jeered by the white left for their efforts. But judged by his platform, Sanders should be directly confronted and asked why his political imagination is so active against plutocracy, but so limited against white supremacy. Jim Crow and its legacy were not merely problems of disproportionate poverty. Why should black voters support a candidate who does not recognize this? (...)

What Bernie Sanders Has Achieved

John Cassidy, March 17, 2016 *The New Yorker*

<http://www.newyorker.com/news/john-cassidy/what-bernie-sanders-has-achieved>

As he has been for most of the past year, Bernie Sanders is on the road. On Thursday, he was scheduled to hold a town-hall meeting at the Twin Arrows Casino, east of Flagstaff, Arizona. You read that right: the seventy-four-year-old Vermont senator was set to issue his trademark call for a “political revolution” and to demand more income and wealth redistribution at a capitalist mecca in one of the most conservative states in the Union.

That, in itself, says something about Sanders and the historical significance of his campaign. He has cast aside many of the rules and adages of American politics, one of which is that it’s hard for liberals, never mind self-described socialists, to win support in the Sun Belt. And although Sanders now seems unlikely to win the Democratic nomination for President, he has achieved much more than that.

In reaching out to the young, the idealistic, and the disillusioned, he has earned far more votes than virtually anybody in the Democratic Party (or the punditry) expected. He has expanded the political space, bringing controversial issues like rising inequality and political corruption, which had previously been considered the province of leftists and policy wonks, into their rightful place at the center of the discussion. And by refusing to accept corporate money and basing his campaign on individual donations, he has reinvigorated American democracy.

It is obvious that Sanders has, in the process, put a scare into Hillary Clinton’s campaign. What is perhaps less widely acknowledged is how close he came to upending it. Of the twenty-five states that have held Democratic primaries and caucuses, Sanders has won nine and Clinton has won sixteen (plus American Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands). But outside the South, where Clinton has won large majorities of black voters, many of Sanders’s losses have been narrow.

Given the way the primary calendar was structured, with many Southern states voting in February and March, Sanders’s route to victory was always going to be precarious. It depended on stunning Clinton early, building up momentum in the Rocky Mountain and Midwest regions, then scoring some big victories in the Northeast and on the West Coast.

The Sanders campaign achieved its initial goal, virtually tying Clinton in Iowa, trouncing her in New Hampshire, and losing by a whisker in Nevada. Had Sanders earned a few thousand more votes in Iowa and Nevada, he would have won all three contests. Given his opponent’s strength among black voters in the South, Super Tuesday was always going to be tricky for him. On election day, Clinton’s victories in the Southern states were even bigger than expected, and they earned her a sizable lead in the delegate count.

Still, Sanders carried Colorado, Minnesota, Oklahoma, and Vermont, and in Massachusetts he came within two percentage points of victory. Over the next week, he won three more states—Kansas, Nebraska, and Maine—and then, of course, Michigan. Had Sanders followed up that shocking triumph by carrying Illinois, Missouri, and Ohio, this past Tuesday, his insurgent game plan would have been back on track.

That it didn’t quite work out doesn’t detract from the impact Sanders has had. To gauge his influence, you need only listen to one of Clinton’s campaign speeches. On issues like inequality, trade, the environment, corporate offshoring, and bringing Wall Street miscreants to justice, the former Secretary of State has adopted Sanders’s language—and, in some cases, his policies. Clinton had undoubtedly always intended to run as a center-left progressive in 2016, just as she did in 2008, but Sanders has forced her onto ground she hadn’t originally intended to occupy.

It isn’t just Clinton, either. Even Republicans have been taking up some of Sanders’s themes. “The top one per cent under President Obama, the millionaires and billionaires that he constantly demagogued, earned a higher share for our national income than any year since 1928,” Ted Cruz said earlier this year. Donald Trump has talked about the need to raise taxes on hedge-fund managers and leveraged-buyout tycoons. John Kasich has rebranded himself as a champion for the poor and excluded. Of course, the regressive tax policies that Cruz, Trump, and Kasich are advocating would exacerbate inequality, rather than reduce it, but the fact that Republicans have felt obliged to address these issues at all surely owes something to Sanders and the populist wave that he represents.

Sanders’s other big theme is money in politics. Particularly since the Citizens United ruling, many politicians, Clinton included, have warned of the corrosive effects of big money on our democracy. But nobody has made the argument as passionately or as powerfully as Sanders. “American democracy is not about billionaires being able to buy candidates and elections,” he said in launching his campaign. “It is not about the Koch brothers, Sheldon Adelson, and other incredibly wealthy individuals spending billions of dollars to elect candidates who will make the rich richer and everyone else poorer.... This is not democracy. This is oligarchy.” (...)

The refugee tragedy in our own backyard

Los Angeles Times October 8, 2015, Opinion Op-Ed **Holly Cooper, Jayashri Srikantiah**

Americans are shocked by the surge of refugees in Europe, but we are ignoring the refugee tragedy in our own country.

Thousands of asylum seekers who come to the United States must fight their cases in immigration court, too often from behind bars. More than 41,000 people applied for asylum in the last fiscal year in court, and many eligible individuals likely fail to apply. These refugees are invisible to us because of Department of Homeland Security detention policies.

When people seeking asylum arrive in this country — at land borders, airports or any port of entry — they are often incarcerated in remote detention centers. After fleeing civil war and persecution, they face months or years in prison-like conditions, caught up in a system that more often than not hinders rather than helps them gain the status they deserve.

The recently opened Mesa Verde Detention Facility in Bakersfield is illustrative. It is a privately run 400-bed detention center, one of more than 250 immigration detention facilities nationwide. The vast majority of the detainees at Mesa Verde wish to request asylum, and most will have to win their cases before they will be released. They will "appear" in immigration court, in San Francisco, via video conferencing. Facing a camera, with the judge hundreds of miles away, they will try to navigate the complex laws governing asylum, sharing stories of abuse, torture, persecution and humiliation.

According to the federal government, people seeking asylum, like others facing deportation, do not have the right to an attorney unless they can pay for one or find someone to represent them for free, which isn't easy. In a study we conducted, we found that only about one-third of the individuals in immigration custody with cases in the San Francisco Immigration Court are represented by a lawyer at any point in their proceedings. Locked in a cell, unable to read or write in English, without the help of a lawyer, they have no hope.

Periodically, a handful of overburdened volunteer attorneys make the five-hour trek to Bakersfield from the Bay Area in an attempt to help. The last trip, in mid-September, demonstrated the futility of this effort.

The lawyers — including one of us — waited in the detention center's cafeteria. What seemed like a never-ending line of people streamed through the doors, all desperate for help — more than 200 refugees from all over the world: Cameroon, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Mexico. They recounted stories of genital mutilation, assassinations, torture and war in their home countries. In the United States, they were being treated like prisoners: held behind bars, wearing jumpsuits, controlled by guards and with limited access to phones or any communication with the outside world.

The volunteer attorneys were permitted to provide a brief orientation on the law, but the need for further assistance was overwhelming. Bay Area nonprofits and clinics had the resources to fully represent no more than one or two of the detainees. The rest would have to make do with a handout optimistically titled "How to Apply for Asylum."

One woman from Central America turned in her blank 10-page asylum application to a lawyer in defeat. "I guess I have no right to apply for asylum here; you should take this," she said, pushing the papers across the table. "No, no, you need to fill it out and turn it into the judge," the lawyer said. "Well, I don't read English. Can you fill it out with me?" Looking at the long line of other refugees, the lawyer had to say no. She replied, "Well then I guess refugees have no rights here." Her words stung, but she wasn't exactly wrong.

We have seen many people give up their asylum cases. They make the impossible decision to return to persecution or torture because there is nobody to help them here. Locked in a cell, unable to read or write in English, without the help of a lawyer, they have no hope. As one former prisoner said, "It's like handing us a scalpel and anesthesia and asking us to perform our own surgery; it's impossible."

It isn't impossible to be granted asylum without an attorney, but the statistics are not promising. Our study showed that detained individuals facing deportation in San Francisco Immigration Court are three times more likely to win their cases if they have representation. But no public or private funder has stepped up to provide that assistance, and efforts like the volunteers in Bakersfield simply don't have the capacity to address even a small proportion of the need.

If remoteness of detention, and the isolation of asylum seekers, is meant to render the United States' refugee crisis invisible, that calculation has prevailed. Worse, if the U.S. detention system is set up to coerce refugees not to apply for asylum, it is succeeding.

Holly Cooper is a lecturer and associate director of the Immigration Law Clinic at the UC Davis School of Law. Jayashri Srikantiah is a professor of law and director of the Immigrants' Rights Clinic at Stanford Law School.

Supreme Court to render a verdict on Obama's use of executive authority

February 7, 2016 David G. Savage Contact Reporter *Los Angeles Times*

<http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-court-presidential-power-20160208-story.html>

5 The Supreme Court has often dealt a big blow to presidents in their second term.

Harry Truman was rebuked for claiming the power to seize strike-bound steel mills during the Korean War. Richard Nixon resigned shortly after the court ruled unanimously he must turn over the Watergate tapes.

Bill Clinton's impeachment was triggered by the court's decision that he must answer questions under oath in the Paula Jones sexual harassment case. And George W. Bush lost before the court when he claimed his power as
10 commander in chief gave him almost unfettered authority over prisoners held at the Guantanamo Bay prison.

Now, as President Obama begins his last year in office, the court is set to render a verdict on his use of his executive authority. The justices will decide whether he violated the law by authorizing more than 4 million immigrants living in the U.S. illegally to come out of the shadows without fear of deportation and obtain work permits.

There are signs that at least some of the justices are ready to rein in the president's ability to take such bold action
15 without the approval of Congress.

Never before has the high court ruled that a president violated his constitutional duty to "take care" that laws are "faithfully executed." Yet when justices agreed to hear the immigration case, they surprised many by asking both sides to present arguments on whether Obama's actions violated the rarely invoked "take care" provision. That question had not even been at issue when lower courts blocked Obama's plan from taking effect.

20 In a separate pending case this term, the court also will rule on whether the president and his healthcare advisors went too far by requiring Catholic charities and other faith-based employers to formally opt out of providing a full range of contraceptives to their female employees by citing their religious objections.

The faith-based entities argued that by notifying the government of their decision to opt out — which triggers a process under which employees would get contraceptive coverage by other means — they would be "complicit" in
25 supplying "abortion-inducing drugs."

The decisions, both due by summer, will help answer a question that looms over Obama's presidency. Has he properly used his power as chief executive to circumvent congressional gridlock on issues such as immigration, climate change and healthcare, or has he gone too far and violated his duty to enforce the laws as set by Congress?

The cases come before the court with a backdrop of Republican claims that the president has overreached and
30 abused his power. Former House Speaker John A. Boehner said Obama was "acting like a king" and "damaging the presidency" when he announced the deportation-relief plan now before the high court.

On the campaign trail, Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas promises GOP voters that, if he is elected president, his first task on his first day in the White House will be to "rescind every illegal and unconstitutional executive action of Barack Obama."

35 White House officials and supporters of the president counter that Obama's actions are not only legal and well within his discretionary authority, but that Congress has left him no choice by refusing to take action on pressing national problems.

Conservative scholars think Obama has left himself vulnerable by announcing broad executive actions on policies that had been considered and rejected by Congress, and which even he once said were beyond his authority.

40 In his first term, Obama told Latino activists who were pushing him to take unilateral action that he could not "waive away the laws Congress put in place" regarding the removal of immigrants who entered the country illegally. But later the president decided he did have the power to suspend deportation and offer "lawful presence" and work permits to as many as 5 million of those immigrants.

So far conservatives have mostly failed to derail Obama in the Supreme Court. Twice, the justices upheld the
45 president's healthcare law against conservative attacks, with Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. casting his vote with the court's four liberals.

Four years ago, in a key test of state-versus-federal power, the court ruled for Obama after his administration sued to block Arizona from enforcing a law to crack down on immigrants in the country illegally.

In 2011, Obama and then-Atty. Gen. Eric H. Holder Jr. raised ruffles on the right when they announced the
50 administration would not defend in court the Defense of Marriage Act, which recognized only marriages between a man and a woman. House Republicans took up the cause, but two years later the high court agreed with the administration and struck down key parts of the law as unconstitutional.

But the new immigration and contraceptive cases pose a tough test for Obama's lawyers. In last year's healthcare case, they were defending a law that had won approval in Congress, when both chambers were controlled by
55 Democrats. "We must respect the role of the legislature and take care not to undo what it has done," Roberts said in upholding its system of insurance subsidies.

This year, by contrast, Obama is defending an executive action on immigration that was taken without the approval of Congress and in the face of fierce Republican criticism. (...)

Column - When universities try to behave like businesses, education suffers

Michael Hiltzik Contact Reporter June 3, 2016, *Los Angeles Times*

<http://www.latimes.com/business/hiltzik/la-fi-hiltzik-university-business-20160602-snap-story.html>

(...) Universities are getting cozier with businesses and industrialists, and less discerning about the pitfalls of these relationships, which include accepting donations with strings attached. What's worse is that universities are adopting the corporate model of profit and loss as though they're businesses themselves.

Students already are losing out. They're not only saddled with an increasing share of the direct costs of their education, but are offered a narrower curriculum as universities cut back on supposedly unprofitable humanities and social science courses in favor of science, engineering and technology programs expected to attract profitable grants and offer the prospects of great riches from patentable inventions.

In one of the most extreme examples, the State University of New York at Albany moved in 2010 to ax its French, Italian, Russian and classics programs. That left the institution looking like a glorified vocational school for engineers and research scientists.

But the issues swirling around Katehi, a Greek-born engineer, have exposed the same rift within UC Davis, where members of the science and engineering faculties defend her as an effective supporter of diversity in science and technical education, and members of the humanities faculty tend to see her as an avatar of the "privatization of the public university," as three dozen humanities faculty members put it in a letter to the Davis Enterprise newspaper.

These developments, however, are based on fundamental misconceptions of the purpose and the economics of higher education.

For most of the post-World War II period, it was well understood that universities, whether public or private, operated under a model distinct from business. That began to shift in the 1980s and 1990s as American culture became fixated on the virtues of private enterprise, says Christopher Newfield, a literature professor at UC Santa Barbara and a leading critic of the corporatization of academia.

"Until then, the private sector wasn't the model for the public sector," Newfield told me. "But the prestige of the private sector now requires imitation by the public sector. It's almost as if we're intimidated."

Adding to the pressure is a "massive defunding of public higher education" by state governments, says Hank Reichman, an emeritus professor of history at Cal State East Bay who writes frequently for the blog of the American Association of University Professors. In California, per student spending from the state's general fund has fallen since 1980 by 43% at the California State University system and 54.7% at UC.

Administrators scurrying to replace these lost resources have turned to what appear to be promising sources — scientific research grants and patent royalties. But the idea that these programs are the key to sustainable budgets is mythical.

At some institutions, patent income looks like a big number, but it's seldom more than a tiny fraction of total needs. UC patent royalty and fee income averaged about \$104.5 million annually from fiscal 2011 through 2014; it soared to \$177.2 million in fiscal 2015 thanks largely to the licensing of a single prostate cancer drug, Xtandi, developed at UCLA. But \$43.4 million of that sum was distributed to inventors; the net income amounted to a paltry one-half of 1% of the UC system's total operating budget of \$27 billion.

Science and engineering programs are heavily funded by outside grants, but the traditional patrons — government and industry — have been stepping away from the plate. A 2014 survey by the Council on Governmental Relations, an association of research universities, found that federal spending on university R&D had fallen to 59.5% of the total in 2012, the lowest share since 1956, before the Soviet Union's Sputnik launch spurred a massive increase in U.S. scientific research. Contributions from state and local governments and industry had fallen by roughly two-thirds.

The burden of costs in higher education has been shifting to students: At UC, tuition and fees now cover 46.3% of the budget, according to the California Budget Project, up from 18.9% in 1998.

These trends have pushed universities into questionable deals with donors. Last year, UC Irvine accepted the first installment of a \$6-million gift from the Dharma Civilization Foundation for four endowed chairs in Hindu studies, before faculty members raised an alarm about the political agenda of the foundation. UCI ultimately rejected the entire donation. Arizona State in 2014 specified that applicants for a post at its new Center for Political Thought and Leadership display a focus on "the relations between free-market institutions and political liberty in modern history," which came suspiciously close to the mindset of the Koch family, which had contributed \$1.3 million in seed money for the center.

What's really at stake in the corporatization of academia is the traditional role the university as a repository of culture and training ground for open inquiry. "The obvious risk," says Michael Meranze, a professor of history at UCLA who shares a blog on academic issues with Newfield, "is that academic research gets done to advance the interests of outside corporations, rather than guided by the logic of the university's mission."

Op-Ed - Can Obama be Reagan? Can the Senate be reasonable?

Akhil Amar and Vikram Amar, February 16, 2016, *Los Angeles Times*

<http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-amar-scotus-choice-stakes-20160216-story.html>

Supreme Court vacancy arises late in the second term of an idealistic and ideological president. He confronts a Senate controlled by his opponents and he hopes to win a third term by proxy. This describes the United States this week — and it also describes the U.S. 28 years ago, but with the Rs and Ds reversed.

Back then, Republican Ronald Reagan had to contend with a Democrat-controlled Senate. Today Democrat Barack Obama must deal with a Senate dominated by Republicans. In 1987-88, Reagan was hoping that his handpicked successor, George H.W. Bush, would extend his presidential legacy, much as Obama's flag now flies with the Democrats' front-runner Hillary Clinton. Just as the resignation of Justice Lewis Powell in mid-1987 opened the way for a pivotal new justice chosen in a genuinely bipartisan process, so now the death of Justice Antonin Scalia creates an opportunity for both parties to work together to select the court's next swing justice.

In 1988, after a few false starts that included the failed nomination of arch-conservative Robert Bork, the country ended up with the more moderate Justice Anthony M. Kennedy. Today, Kennedy straddles the judicial aisle — sometimes siding with Democrat appointees, other times with court Republicans on hot-button issues including same-sex marriage, campaign finance, abortion rights, gun rights, affirmative action and voting rights. Kennedy's decisive votes and views are doubtless different from those a Justice Bork would have generated. The idealistic and ideological Republican in the White House in 1988 didn't get his first choice, but neither did Senate Democrats get exactly what they'd hoped for. That's the essence of compromise.

Is there a nominee acceptable to Obama that the Republican-controlled Senate could tolerate? Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) and Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Charles E. Grassley (R-Iowa) have both signaled that nobody Obama sends over should even be voted on. But other Republicans are taking a softer line. On Saturday, Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) left the door open a crack: "No one will be appointed who isn't a consensus choice."

The key number for consensus is 60% because of filibuster rules. That means 15 or so Republicans would need to join all the Democrats to make up a 60-vote bloc to bring a nomination to the floor over the opposition of the other 40 Republicans. What kind of person could appeal to the president and win over a significant swath of Republicans? It would have to be someone who shares Obama's instincts about democracy and social justice but also Scalia's reverence for constitutional text and history, and his heartfelt respect for the rule of law. It would have to be someone whose constitutional views and philosophies have been laid out publicly, so Republicans could know what they were getting (they have felt burned by "stealth" nominees lacking long paper trails and public track records).

Assuming the president could find someone who fit the right (and left) profile, why should the Republicans give the nominee full consideration? First, a hard-line refusal to give Obama's nominee a fair shake could play poorly with middle America. Come November, an appealing but thwarted nominee could energize the Democrats' electoral coalition, and sway swing voters in crucial states. It is easy for hard-liners now to pronounce that any conceivable nominee is a non-starter; it will be much more difficult to stick to this party line if the president puts forth an articulate, earnest, honest candidate with requisite legal chops and a compelling life story.

Senate Republicans should also note that a compromise candidate today may be far better for them than an unknown future nominee. Imagine, for example, that Clinton wins and the Democrats also regain the Senate. She would not have to compromise on a nominee nearly as much as Obama might be willing to now. (To put an extra-sharp point on the matter: Republicans who hated the very thought of four more years of President Obama back in 2012 should ask themselves how they would feel about 40 more years of Justice Obama in the advent of a Clinton victory. Clinton was recently asked whether Obama might make a good justice, and she seemed quite smitten with the idea.)

There is yet another scenario Republicans must consider: They may win the White House in November but still lose the Senate. A Democrat-controlled Senate would then take office in early January, weeks before Obama leaves the White House. During that overlap, the Democrats could undo the filibuster rule by a simple majority vote (the so-called nuclear option), and Obama could replace his compromise candidate with someone far more liberal. Such a move might seem aggressive, but so too is not giving a president's nominee a fair shake and a floor vote. What goes around comes around.

Now think about the president's incentives. What would Obama gain by threading the needle with a consensus nominee? If common sense and public pressure forced Republicans to accept the candidate, Obama would increase his imprint on the court, and end his presidency with a bipartisan bang. He could make good on his so far unrealized campaign promise to "reduce the polarization and meanness in our politics." (...)

Akhil Amar is a professor of law and political science at Yale University. Vikram Amar is dean and a professor at the University of Illinois College of Law.

How London's booming 'butler class' takes care of the wealthy elite

The Observer, Saturday 12 March 2016

Family offices have their roots in the sixth century when a king's steward held responsibility for managing royal wealth, a model later adopted by many aristocrats, according to accountancy firm EY. But the modern concept of the family office – an organisation that manages private wealth and other family affairs – was developed by the financier JP Morgan and the Rockefellers in the 19th century.

The number of single-family offices in the UK has more than doubled to around 1,000 since the 2008 financial crash, and they manage more than \$1,000bn (£700bn) in assets, with London now the premier global hub for the secretive organisations. The figures come as researchers from Goldsmiths, University of London and Newcastle University claim the proliferation of family offices is entrenching the rise of inherited wealth and income inequality in Britain.

They conclude that the industry has promoted "entrenched elitism", with a growing butler class of financiers and lawyers handsomely rewarded to preserve the wealth and social position of the super-rich.

The number of single-family offices worldwide is estimated to have risen by up to 40% since 2008 to 10,000-11,000, with combined investable assets of up to several trillion dollars, according to industry experts. The exact total is difficult to calculate because they are structured in different ways and they are so secretive that some families may have two offices that are not aware of one another.

In the UK, those that only manage a single family's wealth are unlikely to require registration with the Financial Conduct Authority. Therefore, they are subject to far less scrutiny than private banks and hedge funds, despite the size of their assets making family offices influential players in the global economy.

These offices serve individual families with investable assets of at least \$100m but typically more than \$250m, with the top tier managing fortunes of several billion. There are 44,900 individuals with fortunes of at least \$100m and 4,500 worth more than \$500m, according to Credit Suisse. The average assets under management of 157 single-family offices surveyed by Campden Wealth in 2015 was \$662m. The uber-wealthy known to have family offices include Bill Gates, former Google boss Eric Schmidt, Oprah Winfrey, the Duke of Westminster, the Sainsbury and Goldsmiths families, and inventor James Dyson. There are now about 1,000 single-family offices in the UK, compared with 400 in 2008, according to Sebastian Dovey of wealth consultancy Scorpio Partnership.

Keith Johnston, chief executive of the Family Office Council, which represents 100 single-family offices with combined assets of \$100bn, estimated the total assets under management by all offices in the UK was \$1,000bn. He added the figure could be higher as there could be as many as 1,800 offices in the country.

Johnston said the rise was spurred by the 2008 financial crisis because super-wealthy families were "very cheesed off with their private banks" because of the poor performance of their investments. "They decided to take more control and create a structure which they felt was ... entirely doing their bidding," he added.

Karen Clark, managing director of the Family Office Exchange, which represents 450 single-family offices worldwide with median assets of just more than \$500m, said the rise was also spurred by the subsequent spike in the number of ultra-high net worth individuals, especially since the economic upturn from 2011-12. Over the next 30 years, they will transfer \$16tn in assets, which will increase the need for family offices, according to analysts Wealth-X.

Clark added that London had become the prime location for family offices, not only because of the high concentration of financial and luxury lifestyle services available to meet the needs of the global super-rich but also because it offered a safe haven for those from Russia, China and the Middle East, and a more favourable tax and regulatory environment than its chief rival, New York.

The surge in family offices has also led to exponential growth in a wealthy butler class as the organisations employ three-to-12 core staff, including chief executives and chief investment officers, who are usually senior bankers and investment analysts. Major banks, accountancy and legal firms, and estate agents have also established dedicated teams for super-rich families.

Single-family office CEOs typically earn \$330,000, according to Campden Wealth's 2015 Global Family Office report. But Mark Somers, founder of wealth management recruitment firm Somers Partnership, said those employed by the largest family offices, with assets of several billion, could earn "easily double or triple that". They may also receive bonuses of up to \$400,000, according to the Family Office Club. Other rewards include use of the family's properties or private jets.

Only the largest family offices, which can have more than 100 employees, usually provide in-house lifestyle management services, according to the Goldsmiths and Newcastle study. The concierge staff organise everything to the liking of the family's members, wherever they are in the world: "Everything would be taken care of, globally, so that the right kind of drinks would be available in the car that picked them up, on the plane, and so on. Upon arrival, the properties would be perfect, not just clean but recently decorated to the owner's specification with permanent staff whose job it was to take care of maintenance and gardening."

'Wall Street Journal' Column Claims Mascots Honor Native Americans: This Native American Begs to Differ Tara Houska, 08/05/15, *The Huffington Post* http://www.huffingtonpost.com/tara-houska/wall-street-journal-column_b_7936914.html

Starting with a dig at those who would dare question the polling data in support of Native American mascots, last Friday, Naomi Shaefer Riley published commentary in the *Wall Street Journal* that managed to dismiss Native American voices while simultaneously patronizing our experiences.

Her approach is nothing new, but noteworthy in that she actually bothered to research a few Native American perspectives before casting them aside.

Riley's column was based upon a book written by Jennifer Guiliano, titled *Indian Spectacle*. The book covers the history of Native American mascots, beginning in the 1920s. Guiliano posited that Native mascots were a method to lure in college goers. These mascots were an exciting addition to football games that represented both the savage, capable of barely restrained violence, as well the noble savage, a reminder of the fighting spirit extinguished by America.

Here is where Riley goes off the rails.

She buys into the concept of noble savage and goes on to cite the Boy Scouts use of Native imagery to "instill character." Riley appears to be entirely unaware of the harms tied to the relegation of existing peoples to a one-size-fits-all historical romantic caricature.

The noble savage is a white-washed representation of American exceptionalism, a mythical figure who teaches school children that Manifest Destiny was a patriotic act that ended the tale of Native America for the onset of a new and better world. It overlooks the genocide endured by Native Americans, the theft of children, lands, and cultures that still occur today.

Riley's assessment bypasses the fundamental issue of Native American nations continuing to exist. Her perceived positives of physical prowess, bravery, and resistance uphold the narrative of Native Americans as conquered people of the past. Native mascots allow society to ignore the very real plight of indigenous peoples today, and results in all-too-frequent questions like "Do you live in a tipi? You're Native? Cool, let me just casually claim your experience, I'm part Cherokee on my grandmother's side."

She goes on to cite the National Congress of American Indians, which published a report on Native mascots last fall. Riley expresses doubt at NCAI "claims" that Native mascots harm the self-esteem of Native American children and outright indignation at linking lowered self-worth to suicide.

Perhaps a foray into footnotes would be helpful, as the NCAI report cites several psychological studies, including a 2005 study adopted by the American Psychological Association that empirically demonstrate the harm of mascots to Native children. As suicide is the second leading cause of death for Native Americans ages 15-24, it is harsh at best to denounce an organization for highlighting a harm to at-risk children that is easily removed.

Riley's disregard of Native American voices is not surprising, however. Her tenure as a blogger at the Chronicle of Higher Education ended with her publication of "The Most Persuasive Case for Eliminating Black Studies? Read the Dissertations."

Her post dissected several student dissertations, in one instance openly scoffing at the notion that Clarence Thomas assaulted the civil rights legacy. Clarence Thomas is well known for his opposition to affirmative action, a product of the black civil rights movement that has benefitted scholars of color. Apparently these connections are impossible to make, however.

Riley concluded with a reference to problems plaguing the black community, like high incarceration rates and low graduation rates. The "white man" plays no role in these statistics, in Riley's assessment. In essence, institutional racism has little to no impact on communities of color, and it can be entirely bifurcated from "real issues".

True to form, Riley ended her discussion of Native American mascots by noting high rates of poverty, alcoholism, and gang involvement. In her opinion, a racial caricature on the side of a jersey couldn't possibly "alter your sense of yourself."

One wonders if she would support the reemergence of blackface as a celebrated source of entertainment. It would appear the ongoing dehumanization of an entire race of people plays no role in the perception and experience of Native Americans. I, for one, beg to differ.

In Washington, D.C., the effects that ignorance of modern Native America has on our bottom line are on full display. What Congress would possibly grant tribal nations the right to prosecute non-Native offenders when Native peoples are still viewed as savages from a past era?

References to tribal justice systems as "kangaroo courts" and opposition to allowing tribes run their own affairs, such as managing federal grants for suicide prevention, persist throughout the bureaucracy. Excessive oversight bleeds what little appropriations tribal governments receive, while the federal declination rate to prosecute violent crimes on reservations hovers around 50 percent.

Riley's article ends with a note that she is currently writing a book on Native American culture. I suggest she familiarize herself a bit more with the Native American experience and determine whether being a noble savage openly caricatured in the modern public sphere is a "positive."

*Note: This is a cross-post of an article originally published in *Indian Country Today*

If you think the market is ruining higher education, think again

Rafael Behr

The university tuition fees system is flawed but it could be used to confront class barriers and disrupt elite privilege

The Guardian, Wednesday 1 June 2016

There was no golden age of free university education. There was a period when the state covered tuition costs and disbursed maintenance grants for undergraduates regardless of their financial circumstances, but it was a brief and ungilded: 1977 to 1985.

5 Either side of that window, the picture is complicated by fees, means-testing and loans. Even in the longer period stretching back to the early 1960s, when most students had the bulk of their university costs met by general taxation, someone was still paying. A small minority, disproportionately affluent, enjoyed the benefits of a system subsidised by everyone else.

10 The situation is different now. About half of school-leavers go into higher education. It is unfashionable to argue that things are getting better, least of all in the company of students, but the unmistakable trend over recent decades shows more people, drawn from a wider social pool, going to university and enjoying well-documented benefits. Graduates are likely to earn more and lead longer, more fulfilled lives than their non-graduate peers. They also contribute more to the wider good of society by paying increased levels of tax and displaying higher levels of civic engagement. They are more likely to vote.

15 This process of national self-improvement has continued despite rising tuition fees – which is worth remembering as the government's higher education bill starts its tortuous journey through parliament.

20 Political opposition is already latched on to a mechanism that will allow some universities to raise fees beyond the £9,000 cap. The bill creates a new Teaching Excellence Framework (Tef) that will be used to rank institutions by the standard of tuition they provide – analogous to the existing Research Excellence Framework (Ref), which sorts universities by the quality of their academic inquiries. A higher Tef score will unlock permission to charge higher fees.

25 The idea is that students will be willing to incur higher debts to pay for a course that is pedagogically kitemarked. Universities will be forced to raise their game in order to woo these savvy student-consumers, leading to a universal lifting of standards. To further stoke the fires of competition, the bill makes it much easier for market entrants to award their own degrees and call themselves universities.

30 There is an easy attack on this apparatus from the orthodox left position that instinctively hates competition in the delivery of public goods. The Tories, it is argued, are accelerating a vile commodification of education. It is philistine, because it sticks a price tag on the unquantifiable experience of intellectual inquiry. And it is prejudiced against the poor because the higher the price, the greater the subsequent debt burden. Besides, markets are the engine of capitalism, which is reason enough for some to protest. Thus tuition fees become the emblem of all that is wrong with higher education – and with the “neoliberal” world order in general.

35 But focusing rage on tuition fees has been a losing strategy for the left since the inception of the current funding regime in 1998. The hurdle protesters serially fail to clear is making the alternatives sound attractive. The options boil down to fewer people going to university and unspecified tax

risers, the proceeds of which can be diverted off campus by ministers in a way that fees cannot.

40 Meanwhile fees have not choked off applications by teenagers from lower income backgrounds, who are capable of grasping the cost-benefit equation involved in borrowing against future earnings to get a degree. There is nothing intrinsically evil about this arrangement. If the course doesn't yield the promised wage dividend, the debt doesn't have to be repaid. (Writing off the debts of low-earning graduates has become a significant form of stealthy state subsidy for higher education.) If 45 governments want to raise taxes to iron out structural social inequalities, all the evidence would steer them away from universities to interventions at nursery level, and in the transition between primary and secondary school.

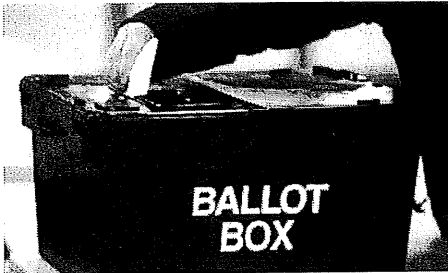
What prospective students without a parental safety net really need is good data on the likelihood of a degree paying off, which is what the Tef is meant to generate. The scoring system will, in theory, take account of future employment rates, student welfare, and diversity in the allocation of places. 50 Universities will be marked down if they look like finishing schools for rich folk.

It is feasible that a market in higher education, properly regulated, can actually break down class barriers and disrupt elite privilege. Allergic reaction to that idea has so shrivelled Labour's policy that it now amounts to little more than a petition against higher fees and a hashtag.

Yet there is plenty to dislike in government policy, separate to the level of fees. The Tef will pile 55 another burden on underpaid, insecure academic staff already labouring under the weight of the soul-numbingly utilitarian Ref. There is vast potential for self-satirising absurdities, with tutors neglecting their students in order to meet the bureaucratic demands of a process designed to make them more attentive to their students. The Gradgrindian conception of a policy that imagines higher education as a twin-track conveyor belt churning out research with lucrative real-world applications 60 and super-skilled graduates deserves critical scepticism.(...)

Lords reject attempt to lower EU referendum voting age to 16

Labour peers with the backing of Lib Dems tried to reinstate proposal in upper house after repeated rejection in the Commons



Polls suggest young people are more likely to favour Britain staying in the EU.

Patrick Wintour Political editor

The Guardian, Monday 14 December 2015

Sixteen- and 17-year-olds will not be given the vote in the the planned EU referendum, after peers succumbed to a government demand and voted to reject an extension of the franchise.

5 The vote, by 263 to 246, ends the risk of a serious constitutional battle between Commons and peers flaring up in the final week of parliament before Christmas, and also means the EU referendum bill will be on the statute book within days, clearing the path for David Cameron to stage the referendum next summer if he wishes to do so.

Last week the Commons rejected votes at 16 and 17 by a majority of more of 50, but Labour peers with the backing of the Liberal Democrats tried to reinstate the widening of the franchise to nearly 1.2 million eligible 16- and 17-year-olds.

10 Labour peers cited the success of the Scottish independence referendum in which 16- and 17-year-olds were allowed to vote, but the government argued that the proposal represented a challenge to the financial privilege of the Commons. It was declared that an extension of the franchise would cost as much as £6m, although Labour contested this figure.

15 Lord Faulks, the Foreign Office minister, said repeated standoffs between the two houses were not good for the democratic framework, and a strong speech by Lord Dobbs, the former Conservative chairman, seemed to persuade some crossbenchers that a decision to challenge the Commons on the issue would damage the delicate relationship between elected MPs and unelected peers.

20 Nigel Farage, the Ukip leader, said the outcome of the Lords vote meant the referendum was now possible within six months, adding: "Game on." The shadow Europe minister, Pat McFadden, tweeted: "It is a shame the Govt was so determined to deny 16 and 17 year olds a vote in the EU referendum. It's their country and their future too."

A decision to back votes at 16 and 17 would have led to a battle with the Commons and the possibility that a referendum could not happen until next autumn at the earliest.

25 Polls suggest young people are more likely to favour Britain staying in the EU, although they are less likely to vote than older people. The government feared that agreeing to give the vote to 16- and 17-year-olds in the EU referendum would have meant it would be necessary to make the same concession in the general election.

30 Lady Morgan, the shadow Foreign Office minister, said it was a once-in-a-generation opportunity for young people to express their view on EU membership. She said many people had been persuaded by the enthusiasm and intelligence demonstrated by young people in the Scottish referendum, in which a higher proportion of 16- and 17-year-olds voted than 18- to 24-year-olds.

35 “Today’s 16- to 17-year-olds are the most informed in history, having undertaken citizenship classes at school and having information not at their fingertips but usually at their thumb tips with their constant tapping of their mobile phones.” She said there was evidence that when people were allowed to start voting at 16 they were more likely to continue to vote as they grew older.

But Faulks said the Commons had voted five times against bringing in the changes since the general election, and so could not be ignored. “There can be very few issues on which the elected house has expressed such a clear view quite so many times in the short period we have been in government,” he said. “We should respect that decision.”

40 An attempt to give 16- and 17-year-olds the vote “might be seen as an attempt to engineer the result and so lead to a loss of confidence in the result,” he added.

45 The Liberal Democrat peer Lord Tyler backed the opposition move and accused the government of switching tactics from trying to defend the “inconsistency” of its stance on voting age to challenging the Lords over financial issues. He said ministers had chosen to trigger a “financial privilege threat” in another attempt to restrict the role, responsibility and relevance of the Lords.

“They are trying to clip the wings of the Lords. This is not just a casual minimalist tweak of the relationship between the two houses, it is part of a much more insidious exercise to dilute our role – some would say to completely neuter the Lords,” he said, to Tory protests.

North-south divide set to widen over next three years, study shows

Chancellor's northern powerhouse ambitions unlikely to bear fruit until 2020 as London continues to grow faster than UK average, EY predicts

The north-south divide is expected to widen further, with economic output in London increasing by an average of 3% a year between 2015 and 2018.

Heather Stewart, *The Guardian*, Thursday 10 December 2015

London's economy will continue to outpace the rest of the UK for at least the next three years, exacerbating the north-south divide, despite the chancellor's "northern powerhouse" initiative, a study shows.

George Osborne has announced a series of devolution deals to city-regions including Manchester, Sheffield and Liverpool, in the hope of stimulating stronger economic growth outside the capital. Launching the programme in Manchester in May, he described it as "a revolution in the way we govern England".

But a forecast from EY consultancy's economists published on Thursday suggests the resulting policies, which include boosting infrastructure – such as by building the HS2 railway line – and allowing councils to keep more of the revenue from business rates, are unlikely to bear fruit until at least 2020.

"From our projections, it's clear that we don't expect the government's northern powerhouse ambitions to have a radical economic impact during our forecast period through to 2018. At best the economic boost will be felt more in the next decade than this one," the report says.

Meanwhile, the north-south divide is expected to widen further, with economic output in the capital increasing by an average of 3% a year between 2015 and 2018; while the north-east will see an annual expansion of just 1.6%. Only London, the south-east and the east are expected to grow faster than the UK average.

Annual average GVA growth



Source: EY ITEM Club

London is expected to outpace the rest of the UK.

Mark Gregory, EY's chief economist for the UK and Ireland, said: "It's more of the same for dominant London over the next three years thanks to the city's outstanding professional services, technology and communications sectors, the return to growth in financial services, and the boost from inward migration."

He added that public spending cuts and rising interest rates are likely to bite hard outside of London. "We predict growth in the rest of the UK will slow slightly whilst remaining stable, as

inflation impacts consumer confidence, interest rates begin to rise and public expenditure reform bites,” he said. 25

That would continue the pattern revealed in official figures published on Wednesday, which showed a sharp divergence between London and its hinterland.

The ONS said average GVA – or economic output – per head was £42,666 in London last year, while in Wales it was just £17,573. The fastest growth in GVA per head in 2014 was recorded in London, where it was 5.3%, more than 1 percentage point ahead of the next two regions, Scotland and the east of England, which experienced growth of 4.2%. 30

Responding to the data, the TUC general secretary, Frances O’Grady, said: “It’s good to see growth across all of the UK’s nations and regions, but outside of London many areas are still in the slow lane.”

She added that depending too heavily on financial services and a buoyant housing market to drive growth could jeopardise the sustainability of the recovery. “Despite London’s stronger performance, the risk is that we are simply seeing a rerun of pre-crash trends,” she said. 35

Her words echoed the warning of John Longworth, director of the British Chambers of Commerce, this week, who warned that the economy remained too reliant on consumer spending. “We have been down this path before, and know that it leaves individuals and businesses exposed when interest rates do eventually rise,” he said. 40

The chancellor arrived in No 11 in 2010 determined to heal the deep regional divide in the UK economy, which has tended to see London’s huge financial services industry and frothy housing market relentlessly outpacing the former industrial heartlands of the north.

But with manufacturing output still more than 6% below its pre-crisis peak, and the economic recovery heavily reliant on services, which tend to be focused in the south, the familiar pattern appears to be reasserting itself. 45

Lord O’Neill, former chief economist of Goldman Sachs, has been appointed a Treasury minister to spearhead the northern powerhouse initiative.

EY expects the east of England to experience 2.4% average growth over the next three years, and the south east 2.5%. It tips several cities within reach of London, including Luton and Reading, as likely success stories over the next few years. 50

Gregory said: “The London effect is certainly being felt in its surrounding cities and should help Reading, Luton and Cambridge to perform strongly to 2018 as investment continues.”

The EY report followed similar findings in a separate study by the Centre for Economics and Business Research in October, which predicted that the gap between London and the rest of the UK would widen over the next decade. 55

Conservative Ideologue Peddles Textbook That Butchers Mexican-American Heritage To Texas Schools

Roque Planas 05/16/2016 *The Huffington Post* http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/conservative-ideologue-peddles-textbook-that-butchers-mexican-american-heritage-to-texas-schools_us_573a1ba8e4b077d4d6f3acd0?utm_hp_ref=latino-voices

When the Texas State Board of Education voted two years ago to create instructional materials for Mexican-American studies, educators and activists walked away cheering. They had asked the SBOE to create a full Mexican-American studies class, citing research showing that it would help boost performance in the state's majority-Hispanic public schools.

The Republican-dominated board declined, but at least a board-sanctioned textbook would help schools individually join a national wave of schools teaching the classes independently — a movement spurred by Arizona Republicans' banning of a controversial but effective Mexican-American studies curriculum in 2010.

But when the Texas Education Agency released its samples of proposed materials last week, they included a Mexican-American studies textbook littered with factual inaccuracies and gross errors of interpretation, many scholars in the field say. The book was authored by writers unknown in the field of Mexican-American studies and produced by a company apparently owned by Cynthia Dunbar, a rightwing former member of the SBOE.

The textbook would cost districts that choose to use it \$69.95 each, according to documents filed with the Texas Education Agency. An ebook version would cost \$10 less. By contrast, educators with experience in the field have put together teaching materials that schools can use free of charge, though such curricula haven't been compiled into a textbook.

The textbook sample posted to the Texas Education Agency's website cites Momentum Instruction, LLC, as its publisher. The company's website says it specializes in creating custom multicultural educational materials.

"These vibrant heritages deserve to be studied, understood, and appreciated," the website says. "All of our instructional materials utilize primary source documents to comprehensively and effectively retell these colorful periods of history." Scholars of Mexican-American studies aren't impressed with this example.

The authors refer to the civilizations of pre-Conquest Mexico as "Indian tribes." They describe the Chicano movement, a civil rights-era Mexican-American social movement, as an attempt to undermine Western civilization and "destroy this society."

Nolan Cabrera, an education professor at the University of Arizona, documented the effects of the banned Mexican-American studies program in Tucson, showing that the classes fostered critical thinking, and led to improved performance on standardized tests and a higher rate of graduation in the majority-Hispanic district. After reviewing the sample textbook submitted to Texas, he concluded it would have the opposite effect.

The book reads like a "trivia contest" of Mexican-American historical dates and suffers from "questionable accuracy," he said. He described the authors' interpretation of the Spanish conquest of the Americas as an "overtly racist attempt to whitewash" its brutality and said the authors parroted debunked criticisms of immigrants as a drag on society.

"This is a terrible example of revisionist, ideological whitewashing of history," Nolan wrote in an email to HuffPost. "It has nothing to do with Mexican American heritage in a meaningful sense. It creates a false image of U.S. history which, ironically, only serves to exacerbate the problems of educational inequity and inter-ethnic tension."

The text also contains bizarre editorializing. "Pressure exists that those of Mexican origin are not 'Mexican enough' or do not have enough sympathy and respect for their roots if they venture beyond the Spanish-speaking world," the text reads toward the conclusion. "This belief, along with the idea that Latin culture must be held up as superior and separate from American culture, holds many back today."

Even the cover of the book — featuring a bare-chested indigenous man sporting an enormous headdress — raised eyebrows. It is unusual for Mexican-Americans to dress like that. The image, like most others in the book, was obtained through an Internet search and published using a "Creative Commons" license.

"It's a racist textbook," said Tony Diaz, one of the educators who pressed the state board to create a Mexican-American studies course last year. "I'm not sure what's more insulting — the way they talk about Mexican-Americans, the history they omit, or the way they talk about Chicanos."

Why No One's Ever Heard Of This Company

If the book falls short of the scholars' standards, it's likely because it was produced by an infant company run by a conservative ideologue with no background in multicultural education.

Phone calls to the number listed on the publisher's website, a Google Voice line, went unanswered. No one returned a voice mail or email seeking comment.

No company by the name of "Momentum Instruction" has been registered at the Virginia address provided on the website, according to the Virginia Corporate Commission and state Department of Taxation.

Two educational companies, however, are registered to the address on Momentum Instruction's website. One is Global Education Ventures, LLC, which was founded on Feb. 8. That company is registered to a second company called Educational Ventures, LLC, which was founded in November of last year. The address for all three companies appears to be the home residence of Cynthia Dunbar, former member of the Texas State Board of Education who now works as an administrator at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia — a religious college founded by the conservative televangelist Jerry Falwell, who died in 2007. Dunbar appears as the registered agent for Educational Ventures. She did not respond to several phone calls and emails requesting comment. (...)

We must weed out ignorant Americans from the electorate

David Harsanyi May 20 *The Washington Post*, David Harsanyi is a senior editor at *the Federalist*.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/we-must-weed-out-ignorant-americans-from-the-electorate/2016/05/20/f66b3e18-1c7a-11e6-8c7b-6931e66333e7_story.html

- 5 Never have so many people with so little knowledge made so many consequential decisions for the rest of us. A person need only survey the inanity of the ongoing presidential race to comprehend that the most pressing problem facing the nation isn't Big Business, Big Labor, Big Media or even Big Money in politics. It's you, the American voter. And by weeding out millions of irresponsible voters who can't be bothered to learn the rudimentary workings of the Constitution, or their preferred candidate's proposals or even their
- 10 history, we may be able to mitigate the recklessness of the electorate. No, we shouldn't erect physical barriers to ballot access. Let's purchase more voting machines, hire additional poll workers, streamline the registration process, mail out more ballots for seniors and produce more "Rock the Vote" ads imploring apathetic millennials to embrace their civic duty.
- At the same time, let's also remember that checking a box for the candidate whose campaign ads you like best
- 15 is one of the most overrated obligations of the self-governed. If you have no clue what the hell is going on, you also have a civic duty to avoid subjecting the rest of us to your ignorance. Unfortunately, we can't trust you.
- Now, if voting is a consecrated rite of democracy, as liberals often argue, surely society can have certain minimal expectations for those participating. And if citizenship itself is as hallowed as Republicans argue,
- 20 then surely the prospective voter can be asked to know just as much as the prospective citizen. Let's give voters a test. The citizenship civics test will do just fine.
- How many screeching proponents of the two major candidates would pass this quiz? Here are some of the questions, which run from easy to preposterously easy:
- "If both the President and the Vice President can no longer serve, who becomes President?"
- 25 "There were 13 original states. Name three."
- "What is one right or freedom from the First Amendment?"
- "What is freedom of religion?"
- I have tempered confidence that at least a majority of the voting public could pass such a test — though I couldn't say the same for a majority of presidential candidates. Certainly, this should be a breeze for citizens
- 30 so intensely involved in the process that they feel compelled to plaster bumper stickers on their cars and attend the rallies of their favorite candidates.
- Or am I being too optimistic? When Newsweek asked a thousand voters to take the official citizenship test a few years back, nearly 30 percent couldn't name the vice president. More than 60 percent did not know the length of U.S. senators' terms in office. And 43 percent couldn't say that the first 10 amendments to the
- 35 Constitution are known as the Bill of Rights.
- Only 30 percent knew that the U.S. Constitution is the supreme law of the land.
- In another study, by the Annenberg Public Policy Center, we learned that only 36 percent could name all three branches of the U.S. government. Only 62 percent knew that the U.S. Supreme Court was tasked with determining the constitutionality of legislation. Fewer than half of Americans knew that split decisions in the
- 40 Supreme Court have the same effect as 9 to 0 decisions.
- These are the people who pick the people who define the basic fabric of the legal system — and often our lives.
- To be fair, the contemporary electorate is probably no less ignorant today than it was 50 or 100 years ago. The difference is that now we have unlimited access to information. As James Madison wrote, "A popular
- 5 Government, without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy; or, perhaps both."
- And it literally takes seconds to learn about the fundamentals of our republic and the positions of candidates. If you forsake the power of information, you have no standing to tell the rest of us how to live our lives. Don't vote.
- 0 Now, some of you will accuse me of peddling crass elitism. But I say the opposite is true. Unlike the many who depend on ignorant voters to wield and secure their power, I refuse to believe that working-class or underprivileged citizens are any less capable of understanding the meaning of the Constitution or the contours of governance than the supercilious 1-percenters. I believe this despite the widespread failure of public schools to teach children basic civics. It's still our responsibility as voters.
- 5 Of course, we also must remember the ugly history of poll taxes and other prejudicial methods that Americans used to deny black citizens their equal right to vote. Any effort to improve the quality of the voting public should ensure that all races, creeds, genders and sexual orientations and people of every socioeconomic background are similarly inhibited from voting when ignorant. For the good of our democratic institutions.

The Truth of 'Black Lives Matter'

By THE EDITORIAL BOARD, SEPT. 3, 2015 *The New York Times*

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/04/opinion/the-truth-of-black-lives-matter.html?_r=0

- 5 The Republican Party and its acolytes in the news media are trying to demonize the protest movement that has sprung up in response to the all-too-common police killings of unarmed African-Americans across the country. The intent of the campaign — evident in comments by politicians like Gov. Nikki Haley of South Carolina, Gov. Scott Walker of Wisconsin and Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky — is to cast the phrase “Black Lives Matter” as an inflammatory or even hateful anti-white expression that
- 10 has no legitimate place in a civil rights campaign.
- Former Gov. Mike Huckabee of Arkansas crystallized this view when he said the other week that the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., were he alive today, would be “appalled” by the movement’s focus on the skin color of the unarmed people who are disproportionately killed in encounters with the police. This argument betrays a disturbing indifference to or at best a profound ignorance of history
- 15 in general and of the civil rights movement in particular. From the very beginning, the movement focused unapologetically on bringing an end to state-sanctioned violence against African-Americans and to acts of racial terror very much like the one that took nine lives at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C., in June.
- The civil rights movement was intended to make Congress and Americans confront the fact that
- 20 African-Americans were being killed with impunity for offenses like trying to vote, and had the right to life and to equal protection under the law. The movement sought a cross-racial appeal, but at every step of the way used expressly racial terms to describe the death and destruction that was visited upon black people because they were black.
- Even in the early 20th century, civil rights groups documented cases in which African-Americans
- 25 died horrible deaths after being turned away from hospitals reserved for whites, or were lynched — which meant being hanged, burned or dismembered — in front of enormous crowds that had gathered to enjoy the sight.
- The Charleston church massacre has eerie parallels to the 1963 bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala. — the most heinous act of that period — which occurred at the height of
- 30 the early civil rights movement. Four black girls were murdered that Sunday. When Dr. King eulogized them, he did not shy away from the fact that the dead had been killed because they were black, by monstrous men whose leaders fed them “the stale bread of hatred and the spoiled meat of racism.” He said that the dead “have something to say” to a complacent federal government that cut back-room deals with Southern Dixiecrats, as well as to “every Negro who has passively accepted the
- 35 evil system of segregation and who has stood on the sidelines in a mighty struggle for justice.” Shock over the bombing pushed Congress to pass the Civil Rights Act the following year.
- During this same period, freedom riders and voting rights activists led by the young John Lewis offered themselves up to be beaten nearly to death, week after week, day after day, in the South so that the country would witness Jim Crow brutality and meaningfully respond to it. This grisly method
- 40 succeeded in Selma, Ala., in 1965 when scenes of troopers bludgeoning voting rights demonstrators compelled a previously hesitant Congress to acknowledge that black people deserved full citizenship, too, and to pass the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Along the way, there was never a doubt as to what the struggle was about: securing citizenship rights for black people who had long been denied them.
- The “Black Lives Matter” movement focuses on the fact that black citizens have long been far more
- 45 likely than whites to die at the hands of the police, and is of a piece with this history. Demonstrators who chant the phrase are making the same declaration that voting rights and civil rights activists made a half-century ago. They are not asserting that black lives are more precious than white lives. They are underlining an indisputable fact — that the lives of black citizens in this country historically have not mattered, and have been discounted and devalued. People who are unacquainted with this
- 50 history are understandably uncomfortable with the language of the movement. But politicians who know better and seek to strip this issue of its racial content and context are acting in bad faith. They are trying to cover up an unpleasant truth and asking the country to collude with them.

Higher Education in Illinois Is Dying

By AMY HASSINGER JUNE 3, 2016 The Opinion Pages | Op-Ed Contributor

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/04/opinion/higher-education-in-illinois-is-dying.html>

Urbana, Ill. — THIS spring my friend's daughter received exciting news: She had been accepted to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. It's our hometown campus, but also the state's flagship public university and one of the best research institutions in the country.

My friend is a single mom with a few part-time jobs; finances are tight in her house. But the university offered them a decent financial aid package, one that would have made it possible for her daughter to attend. If, that is, it was an offer they could count on. But they couldn't. The financial aid letter clearly stated that their award was "contingent upon continued funding" from the state, and might need to be "reduced or rescinded," depending on what happened in Springfield, the state capital.

Ah, Springfield.

Our lawmakers have spent the last year locked in a staggering budget impasse, with no end in sight. The state is deep in debt, with mountains of unpaid bills, while the Democratic-led Legislature and the Republican governor fight a war of attrition. Another deadline just blew by this week: May 31 was the last official day of the legislative session. Still no budget. Any proposal now needs a three-fifths majority to pass, an even higher bar. Meanwhile, the collateral damage is swirling like sand in a windstorm.

Take state-funded Monetary Award Program grants. Normally awarded by both public and private schools throughout the state, these need-based grants went unfunded for nine straight months, from July to April.

Most schools temporarily floated funds to cover the gap, but the money was running dry, causing some schools to either renege on grants they had offered, or even, in the case of Chicago's Illinois Institute of Technology, to ask students to pay back the aid they had already received.

April brought a brief glimpse of hope. The passage of a temporary bipartisan spending bill keeps state universities partially funded through the summer by appropriating \$600 million from the state's Educational Assistance Fund, including funding for MAP grants. On the surface, this looked like good news. But in effect, it translates to a 70 percent funding cut for most state schools. And it's only a temporary fix. Come Sept. 1, it will run out.

As for my friend's daughter, she couldn't take the risk. She went with her second choice, an out-of-state school.

Who wouldn't be wary? Why accept an offer that provides aid in one breath, while in the next tells you the state might take it away? Students throughout Illinois, advised by nervous parents and guidance counselors, have made similar choices. And those are the lucky ones, the ones with options. Others less fortunate may give up on college altogether.

Faculty and staff are nervous, too. Public universities across the state are laying people off at alarming rates. Chicago State University, the predominantly African-American school that has made national headlines lately for its rapid dismantling, laid off 300 employees this spring. A full 30 percent of its budget comes from the state; it now says it may not be able to open come fall if the impasse continues. Downstate, in the hamlet of Charleston, Eastern Illinois University has laid off 261 employees. Over in Macomb, at Western Illinois University, the number is 110.

Even at the University of Illinois, where financial reserves are deeper, departments have had to name the employees they will cut come Aug. 27, if the budget remains stalled. In the meantime, hiring is frozen on all three campuses — Urbana, Springfield and Chicago; only essential positions are being filled. Faculty members nearing retirement wonder whether they will receive their pensions because the state has mismanaged its pension funds for decades; it's now looking at a pension shortfall of about \$111 billion.

President Timothy Killeen issued a statement on June 1 saying he was "deeply concerned" and declaring all options "on the table," including layoffs, cuts and unit closures. In the face of so much instability, more and more professors are being wooed away: Faculty resignations were up by almost 70 percent in 2015.

Public universities were founded on the notion that all students, regardless of their socio-economic status, should have access to a high-quality education. Like the twin towns of Champaign-Urbana, our public universities are cultural oases — intellectual watering holes where students of all backgrounds can gather in the pursuit of education and knowledge. But these oases are drying up while Springfield continues its interminable standoff.

Illinoisans are fed up. Yes, the problem is gnarly and complicated. Yes, the political divisions are deep and wide, just as they are nationally. But our governor and legislators must find a way to cross them soon and to pass a functional budget, before the damage they've already done to public higher education becomes irreversible. Until they do, our best students will head elsewhere for college — or, even worse, nowhere at all.

“Oxford University Will Keep Statue of Cecil Rhodes”

By STEPHEN CASTLEJAN, *New York Times*, 29, 2016



The statue of Cecil Rhodes. Born in 1853, Rhodes attended Oriel College in the 1870s before founding the De Beers diamond empire in South Africa.

LONDON — An outspoken group of students wanted to pull it down, and many alumni wanted it to stay. For months, the authorities at Oxford University have struggled with an awkward dilemma over the fate a statue of Cecil Rhodes, an imperialist benefactor seen by many as an architect of apartheid.

5 Now, after a vigorous debate, Oriel College, one of 38 largely self-governing colleges at Oxford, has decided it will keep the monument to its famous, if divisive, former student.

In a statement issued late Thursday, the college said that it had received more than 500 comments on the subject and that “the overwhelming message we have received has been in support of the statue remaining in place, for a variety of reasons.”

10 “Following careful consideration,” the statement continued, “the college’s Governing Body has decided that the statue should remain in place, and that the college will seek to provide a clear historical context to explain why it is there.”

15 The decision represents a defeat for a group of students who had sought to follow the example of their counterparts at the University of Cape Town, who last year achieved the removal of a statue of Rhodes.

The petition and protest in Oxford had provoked an intense discussion about whether Britain’s colonial past should be judged by contemporary standards, and whether Rhodes should be remembered more as a ruthless colonialist or as a benefactor.

20 The dispute was characterized on one side as an exercise in political correctness and a desire to erase history, and on the other as a test of the university's willingness to acknowledge the sensitivities and values of minority students.

25 Rhodes died in 1902, and his educational legacy includes a prestigious scholarship that bears his name. About 8,000 Rhodes scholars — including a former Australian prime minister, Tony Abbott, who said removing the statue would be an act of “moral vanity,” and former President Bill Clinton — have studied at Oxford thanks to the program set up with money left by Rhodes.

On Friday, the British newspaper *The Daily Telegraph* reported that a leaked copy of a report prepared for the governors said that wealthy alumni were angered by the “shame and embarrassment” brought on the college by efforts to take down the statue, and that donations were at stake.

30 The college now fears that a proposed gift of 100 million pounds, or \$143 million, “to be left in the will of one donor — is now in jeopardy,” the newspaper reported. The group behind the campaign to remove monuments to Rhodes reacted angrily to the college's announcement, describing it as “outrageous, dishonest and cynical.”

35 “This is not over,” the group, Rhodes Must Fall in Oxford, said on its Facebook page. “We will be redoubling our efforts and meeting over the weekend to discuss our next actions,” it said, adding that “the struggle continues!”

40 Last year, Brian Kwoba, a doctoral student, told the newspaper *The Independent* that Rhodes was responsible for “stealing land, massacring tens of thousands of black Africans, imposing a regime of unspeakable labor exploitation in the diamond mines and devising pro-apartheid policies. The significance of taking down the statue is simple,” he added. “Cecil Rhodes is the Hitler of southern Africa. Would anyone countenance a statue to Hitler?”

45 But R. W. Johnson, an author who is an emeritus fellow of Magdalen College at Oxford, compared the campaign to remove the monument to what Al Qaeda and the Islamic State “are doing in places like Mali when destroying statues.” “They are destroying historical artifacts and defacing them,” he told *The Daily Telegraph*. “I think you have got to respect history. In addition, there are many people in history that are far worse than Rhodes.”

Born in 1853, Rhodes attended Oriel College in the 1870s before founding the De Beers diamond empire in South Africa, where he rose to be prime minister of what was then the Cape Colony, from 1890 to 1896.

50 Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, was named after Rhodes, but he was also known for beginning racial segregation in southern Africa and for his belief in the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race. This month, Oxford University's vice chancellor, Louise Richardson, told *The Financial Times* that the discussion was “a distraction from the much bigger issues.”

55 “What's positive about this whole Rhodes Must Fall movement is that it's drawing attention to our history,” she said. “We need to confront our history. We can't pretend it didn't happen, and I think if this encourages students to go to the Bodleian and look at the archives of the Rhodes period, there are some fabulous archives there both about colonialism and about the contemporary anti-Rhodes movement when he was alive.”

The Opinion Pages | Op-Ed Columnist

Sadiq Khan vs. Donald Trump

Roger Cohen, *New York Times*, MAY 9, 2016

The most important political event of recent weeks was not the emergence of Donald J. Trump as the presumptive presidential nominee of the Republican Party but the election of Sadiq Khan, the Muslim son of a London bus driver, as mayor of London.

5 Trump has not won any kind of political office yet, but Khan, the Labour Party candidate, crushed Zac Goldsmith, a Conservative, to take charge of one of the world's great cities, a vibrant metropolis where every tongue is heard. In his victory, a triumph over the slurs that tried to tie him to Islamist extremism, Khan stood up for openness against isolationism, integration against confrontation, opportunity for all against racism and misogyny. He was the anti-Trump.

10 Before the election, Khan told my colleague Stephen Castle, "I'm a Londoner, I'm a European, I'm British, I'm English, I'm of Islamic faith, of Asian origin, of Pakistani heritage, a dad, a husband."

The world of the 21st century is going to be shaped by such elided, many-faceted identities and by the booming cities that celebrate diversity, not by some bullying, brash, bigoted, "America first" white dude who wants to build walls.

15 It is worth noting that under the ban on Muslim noncitizens entering the country that Trump proposes, Khan would not be allowed to visit the United States. To use one of Trump's favorite phrases, this would be a "complete and total disaster." It would make America a foul mockery in the eyes of a world already aghast at the Republican candidate's rise.

20 Khan's election is important because it gives the lie to the facile trope that Europe is being taken over by jihadi Islamists. It underscores the fact that terrorist acts hide a million quiet success stories among European Muslim communities. One of seven children of a Pakistani immigrant family, Khan grew up in public housing and went on to become a human rights lawyer and government minister. He won more than 1.3 million votes in the London election, a personal mandate unsurpassed by any politician in British history.

25 His election is important because the most effective voices against Islamist terrorism come from Muslims, and Khan has been prepared to speak out. After the Paris attacks last year, he said in a speech that Muslims had a "special role" to play in countering the terrorism, "not because we are more responsible than others, as some have wrongly claimed, but because we can be more effective at tackling extremism than anyone else."

30 Khan has also reached out to Britain's Jewish community, vigorously disavowing the creeping anti-Semitism in Labour ranks that last month saw Ken Livingstone, a former London mayor, suspended from the party.

As George Eaton observed in *The New Statesman*: "Khan will be a figure of global significance. His election is a rebuke to extremists of all stripes, from Donald Trump to Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, who assert that religions cannot peacefully coexist."

35 Trump as a politician is a product of American fear and anger above all. In the past several weeks, a U.C. Berkeley student has been escorted off a Southwest Airlines flight because he was heard

speaking Arabic, and an olive-skinned, curly haired Italian Ivy League economist was taken off an American Airlines flight because he was spotted scribbling mathematical calculations that his seatmate found suspicious.

40 Trump — described to me by Norm Ornstein, the political scientist, as “the most insecure and ego-driven person in the country” — is the mouthpiece of this frightened America that sees threats everywhere (even in an Italian mathematician).

When Trump declares, “America First will be the major and overriding theme of my administration,” the rest of the world hears an angry nation flexing its muscles.

45 Khan’s rise, by contrast, is a story of victory over the fears engendered by 9/11. His victory is a rebuke to Osama bin Laden, the Islamic State, jihadi ideology of every stripe — and to the hatemongering politicians like Trump who choose to play the Muslim-equals-danger game. Khan has argued that greater integration is essential and “too many British Muslims grow up without really knowing anyone from a different background.”

50 Sigmund Freud wrote, “It is impossible to overlook the extent to which civilization is built upon a renunciation of instinct.” Donald Trump has written: “I have learned to listen and trust my gut. It’s one of my most valued counselors.” He recently said, “We must, as a nation, be more unpredictable.”

Right.

55 Put together an egotist, a bully, immense power and a taste for gut-driven unpredictability and you have a dangerous brew that could put civilization at risk. Those small fingers would have access to the nuclear codes if Trump was elected.

In this context, Sadiq Khan’s victory is reassuring because he represents currents in the world — toward global identity and integration — that will prove stronger over time than the tribalism and nativism of Trump.

Native Americans mark Thanksgiving with mixed feelings, and a meal for those in need –

November 25, 2015 Sarah Parvini, *Los Angeles Times* <http://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-native-american-thanksgiving-20151126-story.html>

Michael Reifel was 10 years old when his parents' complicated relationship with Thanksgiving started trickling into conversations during the holiday feast. They were grateful for what they had, they would say, "but at the expense of our land." His father would recount tales of when Thanksgiving meals came from the hunt. Deer instead of turkey. Wild turnips instead of sweet potatoes.

"I see them say that with a sense of loss," said Reifel, an Apache. "I was kind of blown away. I never really knew they felt this way."

Thanksgiving has long carried a distinct resonance for Native Americans, who see the holiday as more than an embellished story of Pilgrims and Indians looking past their differences to break bread. For some, it is a "national day of mourning."

For Reifel, along with members of other tribes in the group United American Indian Involvement, the holiday's meaning is twofold. Serving a holiday dinner to those in need presents an opportunity for the community to get together, pass on history and give thanks the way their ancestors did long before settlers arrived.

It also offers a chance to move past the anger and discuss the challenges the community faces today — issues such as the push to recognize Indigenous Peoples' Day on Columbus Day, or efforts to eliminate team mascot names they see as offensive, like the Redskins.

"There are mixed feelings about it," Reifel said of Thanksgiving. "But we are family, and it is a holiday that has to do with being together."

Beginning in 1970, the group began serving Thanksgiving meals on Los Angeles' skid row as a way to care for homeless Native Americans on Winston Street, also known as "Indian Alley." At the time, the organization fed 200 people. Wednesday's Thanksgiving meal drew more than 300 — some were homeless, others had once lived on the streets or wanted to share a meal with those who found themselves there.

The attendees lined up in the halls outside a downtown L.A. community room before noon, waiting for their lunch of turkey, mashed potatoes and tamales, among other fixings. A pile of Egg McMuffins greeted those with more unconventional Thanksgiving palates.

"We have no Pilgrims, just Indians," Douglas Cyrette laughed.

Cyrette, who has attended the group's Thanksgiving meals since 1975, says he doesn't appreciate the way Thanksgiving is portrayed but attends the celebration because "it's about getting everyone together."

"I live in a convalescent home. This is a big deal for me, to be around other Indians," said Cyrette, 67.

"If I wasn't here I'd be eating in my room alone."

A spirit plate was left for those who passed during the year, an offering to show gratitude and acknowledge that all generations are present, even if not physically. Volunteers piled food onto paper plates and served elders at their tables.

"Either I can wake up angry, or I can wake up positive," Chief Executive Jerimy Billy said before the crowd dug into their meals. Billy emphasized the importance of moving on from the pain of the past and the mourning once reserved for the holiday. Grief has given way to spiritual and physical togetherness, he said.

"We have this holiday. We have a few days off. Use this time with your family," he said. "That's why we do this Thanksgiving feast. I know it started as giving to the less fortunate, but now it's about a time to gather."

Many tribes have celebrations year-round that correspond with the seasons, said Joseph Quintana, the group's development director. The idea, he said, is that those "who have the most give to those with the least." In a sense, he said, the Thanksgiving celebration is consistent with tribal traditions that call for gratitude, reflection and giving back.

"It's a time to come together," Peter John Running Horse said. "We don't look at this as what happened in Pilgrim times, but as a family celebration."

He clutched his granddaughter in his lap while his grandson made a plastic fork and knife dance on the red tablecloth. Life is like a river, he explained as he looked at his family.

"A river gives water to creatures, to travelers passing by," he said. "This is what this gathering does."

And it makes sure you are not forgotten."

Metro mayors can help Labour return to government

Labour champions in the new city regions can help their party at the national level too.
By Alexander Adranghi, *New Statesman*, 27 May 2016

2017 will mark the inaugural elections of directly-elected metro mayors across England. In all cases, these mayor and cabinet combined authorities are situated in Labour heartlands, and as such Labour should look confidently at winning the whole slate.

Beyond the good press winning again will generate, these offices provide an avenue for Labour to showcase good governance, and imperatively, provide vocal opposition to the constraints of local government by Tory cuts.

The introduction of the Mayor of London in 2000 has provided a blueprint for how the media can provide a platform for media-friendly leadership. It has also demonstrated the ease that the office allows for attribution of successes to that individual and party – or misappropriated in context of Boris Bikes and to a lesser extent the London Olympics.

While without the same extent of the powers of the sui generis mayor of the capital, the prospect of additional metro-mayors provide an opportunity for replicating these successes while providing experience for Labour big-hitters to develop themselves in government. This opportunity hasn't gone unnoticed, and after Sadiq Khan's victory in London has shown that the role can grow beyond the limitations – perceived or otherwise - of the Corbyn shadow cabinet while strengthening team Labour's credibility by actually being in power.

Shadow Health Secretary and former leadership candidate Andy Burnham's announcement last week for Greater Manchester was the first big hitter to make his intention known. The rising star of Luciana Berger, another member of Labour's health team, is known to be considering a run in the Liverpool City Region. Could we also see them joined by the juggernaut of Liam Byrne in the West Midlands, or next-generation Catherine McKinnell in the North East?

If we can get a pantheon of champions elected across these city regions, to what extent can this have an influence on national elections? These new metro areas represent around 11.5 million people, rising to over 20 million if you include Sadiq's Greater London. While no doubt that is an impressive audience that our Labour pantheon are able to demonstrate leadership to, there are limitations. 80 of the 94 existing Westminster seats who are covered under the jurisdiction of the new metro-mayors are already Labour seats. While imperative to solidify our current base for any potential further electoral decline, in order to maximise the impact that this team can have on Labour's resurgence there needs to be visibility beyond residents.

The impact of business is one example where such influence can be extended. Andy Burnham for example has outlined his case to make Greater Manchester the creative capital of the UK. According to the ONS about 150,000 people commute into Greater Manchester, which is two constituency's worth of people that can be directly influenced by the Mayor of Greater Manchester.

Despite these calculations and similar ones that can be made in other city-regions, the real opportunity with selecting the right Labour candidates is the media impact these champion mayors can make on the national debate. This projects the influence from the relatively-safe Labour regions across the country. This is particularly important to press the blame of any tightening of belts in

local fiscal policy on the national Tory government's cuts. We need individuals who have characteristics of cabinet-level experience, inspiring leadership, high profile campaigning experience and tough talking opposition credentials to support the national party leadership put the Tory's on the narrative back foot.

That is not to say there are not fine local council leaders and technocrats whose experience and governance experience are vital to Labour producing local successes. But the media don't really care who number two is, and these individuals are best serving the national agenda for the party if they support A-listers who can shine a bright spotlight on our successes and Tory mismanagement.

If Jeremy Corbyn and the party are able to topple the Conservatives come next election, then all the better that we have a diverse team playing their part both on the front bench and in the pantheon of metro-mayors. If despite our best efforts Jeremy's leadership falls short, then we will have experienced leaders in waiting who have been able to afford some distance from the front-bench, untainted and able to take the party's plan B forward.

The British Museum should ignore the protesters and take BP's money

Tom Harris *Daily Telegraph*

4 April 2016 • 5:58pm

Orwell coined the phrase “Four legs good, two legs bad” as an illustration of the fatal limits of political ideology. Ignoring the lesson the *Animal Farm* author was trying to convey, the British Left, in the Eighties, tried to assert its moral superiority by declaring “Public good, private bad”.

5 Then Tony Blair happened and the Labour Party seemed comfortable with “whatever works” as a political philosophy so long as the public was thinking along the same lines. Yet the undercurrent of disdain for the private sector – you know, for the people whose enterprise pays for every penny of our public services – never disappeared.

10 It is there again in the demand made this week in a letter to the *Guardian* that the British Museum eschew any financial relationship with BP. This command has come from those whom you and I might describe as the usual suspects, including, of course, Emma Thompson, the 9/11 conspiracist and part-time Incredible Hulk, Mark Ruffalo, the Oscar-winning Jeremy Corbyn fan, Mark Rylance, and Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell.

15 BP giving shed loads of cash to the British Museum so that the latter can continue to provide a world-beating service of education and information to the public is, apparently, showing the museum to be “completely out of touch”. But out of touch with whom, exactly?

20 The bone of contention is that BP is an oil producer. Its activities may be entirely legal, its products may be used and depended upon, in one form or another, by every single citizen of these islands. But that counts for little when a minority of privileged individuals with a public platform express their disapproval. Jess Worth of the campaign group behind the letter, Art Not Oil (and who knew
25 that that was the binary choice we all faced?), says we should “move away very, very fast” from the oil companies.

30 So, let us first congratulate all the signatories for their leadership in presumably never having used a fossil-fuel-powered vehicle – you know, a car or airplane or train. Such commendable sacrifice must have had quite a negative impact on their ability to pursue their respective careers. We salute their dedication to the cause.

35 We would also like to ask those same letter-writers to expand on their suggestion that the British Museum return BP’s cheque: how do they suggest that the subsequent and not insubstantial funding gap be filled? Expecting the public to dig even deeper at this time of austerity is a non-starter. So what did Art Not Oil have in mind? How many ethically-approved private benefactors did they foresee queuing round the block at Great Russell Square, cheque books at the ready?

40 I wonder if Art Not Oil has considered the consequences of their demands. In the absence of BP’s money, and with no lavish replacement coming from an alternative source, how will the British Museum cope? How will its services be affected? How many staff will have to go? How many new exhibitions will be put on ice? How many school trips will be cancelled because of a lack of facilities?

But perhaps I’m missing the bigger picture. What does the education of our children in the culture

and history of ancient Egypt matter when, instead, we can attack the willingness of big business to give to the arts? And while we're at it, condemn our great institutions for accepting such tainted largesse. For BP's crimes are far worse than being successful and profitable: it is the very destroyer
40 of the planet.

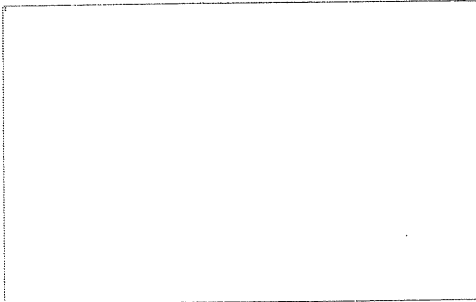
"If high-profile philanthropic individuals and organisations are to be vetted according to whether their activities are currently unfashionable, they can be expected to hold onto their money rather more tightly"

But for the British Museum to refuse the sponsorship would effectively be the inverse of a boycott.
45 Boycotts are intended to deprive targets of customers and income, thereby forcing them into a new, improved form of behaviour. So what do BP's detractors hope to achieve by demanding that the company keep its own money? The activists would not, presumably, approve of the cash going to an alternative charitable cause – and in any case, what organisation would choose to be the target for activists' high-profile opprobrium after all the fuss over the British Museum? Perhaps Arts Not
50 Oil will only be satisfied if the company simply endures a tiny increase in its annual profits. Take that, BP!

These are murky and dangerous waters. If high-profile philanthropic individuals and organisations are to be vetted according to whether their activities are currently unfashionable (however sought after their products may be), they can be expected to hold onto their money rather more tightly.

55 The losers from that unhappy quarrel will be neither the prospective donors nor their detractors, but the institutions who will no longer receive funding. Either that, or the public purse will once again be expected to fill the gap. And those who blindly insist that "Public good, private bad" can consider the day won.

Scrap the national curriculum at age 14 to allow teenagers to focus on work, says Lords report



The national curriculum should finish at the age of 14, the House of Lords has said

Josie Gurney-Read, Online Education Editor, *Daily Telegraph*, 8 April 2016

The national curriculum should finish at the age of 14, in order to give teenagers time to prepare for the work place, a report by the House of Lords has said.

According to the Committee on Social Mobility, young people should be able to choose before the age of 16 whether they want to pursue an academic or a vocational route beyond mainstream school, as the current system from 16-18 doesn't recognise that "transitions to work take longer for some young people".

The report suggested that this could help correct the historic "high drop out" rate from education post-GCSE, which according to a 2012 study from the OECD, saw the UK rank 26th out of 34 countries for participation rates at 17 (87 per cent, compared with the OECD average of 90 per cent).

It added that careers education should be present in school from the age of 11, warning that the current system for those who choose not to attend university was "complex and incoherent" leaving many young people "disengaged".

The report, *Overlooked and Left Behind*, made a series of recommendations for improving the transition from school to work; focusing on the 53 per cent of young people who do not follow "traditional" academic routes into careers.

It suggested that vocational routes should be introduced to young people earlier in life so that a "tailor-made route to work" could be developed. It blamed the current system for creating a "captive audience for 12 years" meaning many youngsters see vocational education as an "afterthought".

Baroness Corston, Chair of the Committee, said that the options presented to young people going into further education were "gobbledygook" and that employers often struggled to understand the "bewildering array" of non-traditional qualifications.

"The current system for helping people move from school to work is failing most young people," she said. "They are simply not being adequately prepared for the world of work. This significantly disadvantages a huge number of young people and limits their opportunity for social mobility."

On apprenticeships, the committee found that only six per cent of 16-18 year olds undertake one. Indeed, 77 per cent of apprenticeship starts in 2014/15 were over the age of 19, with 41.6 per cent

of new starters being over the age of 25.

30 Referring to the Government's pledge to create three million apprenticeships by 2020, the report stated that "quality" rather than quantity had to be the focus for new apprenticeships, to make sure the system maintained a positive reputation among employers.

Further recommendations in the report included:

- 35 - a new gold standard in independent careers advice to start from 11,
- the Government to act as a facilitator between schools and colleges, and local employers,
- a new Cabinet minister to take responsibility for the transition between school and work,
- and data to be made available on the destinations of school-leavers not continuing to university.

Baroness Corston continued: "We have found that without being taught life skills, given the right support, access to work experience and robust, independent careers advice, we are in danger of trapping these young people in low-skilled, low-paid work, with little chance of a rewarding career.

40 "A young person considering their options for further education or employment is presented with gobbledygook. It is totally unclear to them how they can get the skills needed for a successful career.

45 "Non-traditional qualifications are also poorly understood by employers, who cannot be expected to understand the bewildering array on offer, much less have confidence in their quality. That is a major barrier to young people in finding a job."

Alice Barnard, chief executive of education charity the Edge Foundation said: "The Social Mobility Committee is absolutely right. The inequality between academic and vocational education is unfair, restricts social mobility and does not meet the UK's economic needs.

50 "Despite making up the majority of the future workforce, young people who take some form of vocational education when they leave school receive much less attention and investment than students who take A levels and go to university."

55 She added: "We support the Committee's recommendation to stop the national curriculum at 14 and enable students to transfer to a core 14-19 curriculum with tailor-made academic or vocational options. Edge has long supported University Technical Colleges, Studio Schools and Career Colleges which already blend a core academic curriculum with technical specialisms, creating clear pathways for students into apprenticeships, higher education or work."

60 Malcolm Trobe, interim general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), agreed that the "intense academic focus" of the curriculum was "too narrow for some students". He added: "The report also highlights the low level of funding for 16-19 year olds which has had a major impact on the ability of schools and colleges to provide the curriculum breadth and choice needed by young people. Greater investment is urgently needed."

A Department for Education spokesperson said: "Latest figures show the number of young people not in education or training is at the lowest on record and we have the highest ever number of young people going into higher education. (...)

Sunday trading rules will not be relaxed after SNP decides to oppose plans

SNP group agrees to vote against proposals in historic House of Commons vote as bill fails to protect premium pay received by employees in Scotland

MPs will be voting on Sunday trading for the first time since 1994

By Christopher Hope, Chief Political Correspondent.

Daily Telegraph, 08 Mar 2016

George Osborne's plans to extend Sunday shopping hours in England look set for defeat after Scottish MPs said they would vote them down in the House of Commons just days before next week's Budget.

5 The proposals to devolve powers over opening hours on Sundays to councils in England with additional protections for shop workers across the UK were first proposed by Mr Osborne in last summer's Budget.

At least 23 Tory MPs - furious that the Chancellor was pushing through a policy which was not in the Tory general election manifesto - had made clear that they opposed the relaxation, when it is put to a vote later today.

10 This meant that the Government would only win the vote if the SNP abstained or voted in favour of the plans.

However, at a meeting on Tuesday night in Parliament, SNP MPs said they had agreed to vote against the proposals "as the bill fails to protect the premium pay currently received by employees in Scotland", confirming a report in Tuesday's *Daily Telegraph*.

15 However, one rebel Tory MP said that "if the SNP vote en bloc, we have won", suggesting the Government might lose the vote by a majority of at least 15.

David Burrowes, the Conservative MP who has proposed the rebel amendment to kill the plans, added he would not be withdrawing the amendment which means it will be put to a vote.

20 The MP was "open for discussions with the Government about how to find a way out of it" up to the vote today. He said: "The issue is not defeating the Government but defeating this particular measure."

A previous vote to relax Sunday trading rules was dropped last Autumn when ministers became aware of the scale of opposition among Tory MPs, led by Mr Burrowes.

25 The deciding meeting of SNP MPs in Parliament on Tuesday night lasted around 20 minutes with the proposal for the party to vote against Sunday trading laws being passed unopposed.

SNP Economy spokesman Stewart Hosie MP said: "Protecting Scottish workers has been paramount to our decision to oppose the government's plans on Sunday Trading.

30 "We have had Sunday Trading in Scotland for some time and the SNP has never been opposed to it, however our concerns here are rooted in the knock-on impact to Scottish workers who would be at risk of pay cuts."

"SNP MPs have considered all sides in this debate and our decision has been made so workers in Scotland are protected."

Mr Hosie denied a deal had ever been done with Mr Osborne despite previous claims the SNP had agreed to abstain from voting.

35 The Dundee East MP said the party would consider any last-minute amendments tabled by the government but expressed concern there were no legal protections for Sunday pay premiums.

It is understood a fear of being portrayed by Labour as abandoning the concerns of Scottish workers in the run-up to May's Holyrood elections was a factor in the decision.

40 Sir Gerald Howarth, one of the Conservative rebels MPs, said there had been a "degree of cavalier thinking at the top of Government" in its approach to Sunday trading.

"There has been degree of cavalier thinking at the top of the Government; they did not include this in the election manifesto; they did not consult with the party; and they sought to introduce it in the most bizarre fashion by tacking it onto another bill and sneak it through after a three hour debate.

45 "We had this with same sex marriage, which caused needless dissension in the Conservative party, we are having an emotive internal debate on Europe and now they want to pick a fight on Sunday trading without any consultation."

James Lowman, chief executive of Association of Convenience Stores, welcomed the decision, saying: "MPs from every political party in the House are unconvinced by the Chancellor's arguments on Sunday trading, including many within Government.

50 "There is clear evidence that these proposals will be damaging both economically and socially, and we urge MPs to vote against the Government's plans."

A Government source said on Tuesday evening: 'It's disappointing and hypocritical of the SNP to be trying to deny people the freedoms to shop that are already available to those they represent in Scotland.

55 'It's a particularly extraordinary position for a party that supposedly believes in devolution of powers from Whitehall to be seeking to stand in the way of local leaders in the rest of the UK being able to choose what's right for their communities and their economies.' (...)

President Obama: Islamophobia Is Not American

By John Nichols FEBRUARY 4, 2016 *The Nation*

Barack Obama delivered one of most powerful and important speeches of his presidency at the Islamic Society of Baltimore on Wednesday. It was powerful and important because of its historical depth. It was powerful and important because of its practical message. It was powerful and important because of its emotional range.

But it was also powerful and important because of its timing.

This was Obama's first presidential visit to a mosque in the United States. Many Muslim Americans and advocates for religious pluralism had urged him to come sooner. But there can be no question that Wednesday's appearance came at a necessary moment, and that the president used it to deliver a vital message.

Speaking at a point when anti-Muslim rhetoric is heard not merely on the fringe of our politics but in the thick of the campaign to choose the president's successor, Obama did not merely give a great speech. He took a great stand.

The president, having pointed out that, "recently, we've heard inexcusable political rhetoric against Muslim Americans that has no place in our country," went on to say, "We can't be bystanders to bigotry. Together, we have to show that America truly protects all faiths."

On the chance that anyone might miss the point of the president's remarks, White House spokesman Josh Earnest previewed the speech by decrying the ugly rhetorical efforts of "some Republicans to try to marginalize law-abiding, patriotic Muslim Americans."

"It's just offensive to a lot of Americans who recognize that those kinds of cynical political tactics run directly contrary to the values that we hold dear in this country," Earnest told reporters. "And I think the president is looking forward to the opportunity to make that point."

Earnest did not name specific Republicans, and neither did the president. But no one who has been paying attention to the 2016 presidential race can be unaware of the fact that billionaire Donald Trump has said that he "would certainly implement" a database to track Muslims in America, and that the United States has "absolutely no choice" but to close some mosques. Around the same time that Trump was making his crude comments, Texas Senator Ted Cruz was talking up the notion that Christian refugees could be admitted to the United States while Muslim refugees might be barred. The supposedly more mainstream Marco Rubio has gone so far as to decry Obama's efforts to address discrimination against Muslims, with the Florida senator calling it "cynicism" for the president "to spend a significant amount of time talking about discrimination against Muslims. Where is there widespread evidence that we have a problem in America with discrimination against Muslims?"

Rubio's remarks were at odds with reality. In the same campaign season, in the same caucus and primary states where the Floridian has been campaigning, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders said on Wednesday that he had spoken with Muslim Americans who are "frightened with all this hate talk going on." And assessments by the Council on American-Islamic Relations and other groups have detailed rising numbers of attacks and threats against American Muslims and mosques in the aftermath of last fall's terror attacks in Paris and San Bernardino. And, as *The New York Times* recalled Wednesday, "At a meeting at the White House last month, prominent Muslim Americans pleaded with senior administration officials to have the president visit a mosque in the hopes of stemming such attacks."

The president has answered the call.

In his speech at the Islamic Center, Obama spoke about threats Muslim Americans have faced. And he decried them with inspired passion.

"We have to reaffirm that most fundamental of truths: We are all God's children, all born equal with inherent dignity," explained Obama, who added that, "as Americans, we have to stay true to our core values, that includes freedom of religion—for all faiths."

"Muslim Americans are some of the most resilient and patriotic Americans you'll ever meet," said the president, who spoke in great detail of the long and rich history of Islam in America.

This was a speech that was of great political importance because, of course, it was about more than politics.

The president of the United States was delivering a message to all Americans, Democrats and Republicans, conservatives and liberals, people of all faiths and of all backgrounds.

There must be "no doubt," said President Obama on Wednesday, "Islam has always been a part of America."

Harvard to honor slaves who worked, lived at Wadsworth House

by Laura Krantz Globe Staff March 30, 2016 *The Boston Globe*

Harvard University was “directly complicit in America’s system of racial bondage” and should do more to acknowledge its ties to slavery, president Drew Faust said Wednesday in a forthright opinion piece in the student newspaper that sparked mixed reactions on campus.

Faust announced that next month, the university will unveil a plaque at Wadsworth House — the former home of Harvard presidents — in memory of four slaves who lived and worked in the building.

“Although we embrace and regularly celebrate the storied traditions of our nearly 400 year history, slavery is an aspect of Harvard’s past that has rarely been acknowledged or invoked,” Faust wrote.

Faust, a historian of the American South and the Civil War, raised the issue as Harvard and other universities grapple with symbols of their history, histories that are often intertwined with slavery.

Earlier this month, Harvard Law School moved to change its shield, which uses elements of a former slaveholding family’s coat of arms. Harvard has also dropped the term “house masters” when referring to those who supervise some undergraduate residence buildings and will instead call them “faculty deans.”

In her letter, Faust also announced that in March 2017, the university’s Radcliffe Institute plans to host a major conference on universities and slavery.

“The importance of slavery in early New England was long ignored even by historians, and the presence and contributions of people of African descent at Harvard have remained a largely untold story,” Faust wrote.

The institution was complicit even after slavery ended in Massachusetts in 1783, she wrote, and “Harvard continued to be indirectly involved through extensive financial and other ties to the slave South up to the time of emancipation.”

Harvard professors and students praised Faust’s announcement but some said the university should do more to concede its history.

“It’s a shame that it had to take this long,” said William Greenlaw, a junior from Indiana who is black. “That said, I think it’s very good that we’re acknowledging that.” Senior Sarah Cole said a plaque is an insufficient recognition of slaves’ sacrifices, and that it should not be hung in the place they were enslaved. “It seems so inadequate to recognize people who were forced to sacrifice their lives” said Cole, a black student from Kansas City.

Cole said a more fitting tribute would be to change the names of buildings that are named for those who owned slaves or participated in the slave industry, though she did not know which buildings. She also suggested starting a fund for descendants of slaves.

Several professors, alumni, and historians applauded Faust’s letter as bold.

Lawrence Bobo, chairman of Harvard’s African and African American Studies Department, praised Faust’s commitment to hold talks about slavery. “The burdens of a slave past are an inescapable part of the American experience, at Harvard too. Concrete and honest recognition of that past is a necessary ingredient to real healing,” Bobo said in an e-mail.

“It’s a huge tribute to these really dogged efforts by students and faculty on campuses all over to contest the stories that we tell ourselves about who we are,” said Francie Latour, a Harvard graduate and former *Globe* staff writer and Boston-based writer who has researched slavery in New England.

Linda Heywood, a professor of African history at Boston University, said two slave names mentioned in the op-ed, Bilhah and Juba, are Muslim, a fact she hopes won’t be overlooked.

“There was a long presence of Muslims even in the very center of where America began its independence,” Heywood said. “We don’t have to declare all Muslims to be our enemies. We brought Muslims here as children, as families.”

Similar explorations of college history are unfolding on campuses across the country.

Students at Yale University raised concerns about Calhoun College, one of 12 residential colleges and named for John C. Calhoun, a Yale valedictorian and former vice president from South Carolina who was a prominent slave owner and a white supremacist. The university has not decided whether to change the name.

Amherst College recently dropped its unofficial mascot, Lord Jeff, because historians say his namesake, Lord Jeffery Amherst, a British commander during the French and Indian War, supported giving blankets laced with the smallpox virus to Indians to advance the goal of wiping them out.

Eric Foner, a history professor at Columbia University who studies slavery, said Columbia has undertaken a similar project to investigate the role of slavery in its past. Slavery existed in all the Colonies before the American Revolution and even after its abolition in the North, many northerners profited from dealing in the products of southern slave labor, he said in an e-mail.

“Too often, people in the North think of slavery as a southern institution,” he said in an e-mail.

Craig Steven Wilder, a history professor at MIT, said he hopes Faust’s words will spur even more colleges to explore their pasts. “We have an obligation to acknowledge these persons and our debts,” Wilder said. “The story of education in New England is a part of the history of slavery.”

Faust’s letter was noticed outside of academia, as well, including by Marita Rivero, executive director of the Museum of African American History in Boston. “Everyone is enriched when we tell the whole American story,” Rivero said. “We allow people to see themselves and one another in our full dimension.”

Column: The GOP's misogyny problem is bigger than Donald Trump

Meghan Daum *Chicago Tribune*, April 1, 2016

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/commentary/ct-republicans-misogyny-sexism-trump-20160331-column.html>

There's something almost sweet about the way Democrats and establishment Republicans are coming together over their shared disgust with Donald Trump. Unable to find common ground on even the most basic issues (for instance, the constitutionality of nominating a Supreme Court justice during an election year), they have finally identified a mutual enemy and are piling on with rare bipartisan vigor.

Trump's defects by now can be recited as easily as the alphabet. He's a bully, a blowhard, an unabashed liar and a race baiter if not an actual racist. He appears to know little about domestic policy and less about foreign policy. He incites violence at his rallies. On Tuesday, his campaign manager was charged with misdemeanor battery for grabbing a reporter at a campaign event in Florida.

But his signature bad quality, especially lately, is misogyny. Trump hates woman, we are told. Unless they are stuck to his arm like voluptuous lollipops, he has no use for them.

Last month, Trump tweeted an unflattering photo of Heidi Cruz, wife of his rival Ted Cruz, with a glamour shot of his own wife, a former model. His feud with Fox News anchor Megyn Kelly is now almost a plank in his platform. Married three times, he has bragged about his affairs and he wrote in "The Art of the Comeback": "If I told the real stories of my experiences with women, often seemingly very happily married and important women, this book would be a guaranteed bestseller."

But is Trump a misogynist or just a cheesy blowhard who values in women the same gaudy qualities he values in everything else? His tastes in home decor, for instance, seem to have been shaped chiefly by "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous." (He has a penchant for marble, gold and reproductions of Greek statues.)

What's more, his claims of championing and promoting women in his company aren't necessarily wrong. At the very least, there are apparently well-paid women in executive positions in the Trump Organization, and there's no getting past the fact that he puts great stock in his eldest daughter. As the Trump Organization's executive vice president of development and acquisitions, Wharton Business School grad Ivanka Trump has been her father's right hand on "The Apprentice" and appears to have received far more professional grooming than her brothers, who also work for him.

For some, the definition of misogyny might be as slippery as former Justice Potter Stewart's definition of pornography: "I know it when I see it." But to me, the Oxford Dictionary's definition — "hatred or dislike of, or prejudice against women" — seems pretty accurate. And it doesn't describe Trump, who is merely prejudiced against women he finds unattractive or who cross him.

Is being a crude, shallow boor when it comes to women tantamount to being a misogynist? Not when you're also a crude, shallow boor when it comes to men as well. Trump's grotesqueness is an equal opportunity deal. Besides, being a genuine misogynist would require having a genuine point of view, which Trump seems to lack about everything except his own superlativeness. In fact, labeling him a misogynist almost gives him too much credit; it assumes some kind of core belief system.

But here's who does have a core belief system about women: Many Republicans who are hypocritically calling out Trump as a woman hater. They're men like Cruz, who has consistently voted against laws that would allow women access to reproductive health services. Or like Glenn Beck, who compared Clinton to a dog and pretended to vomit at the mention of Nancy Pelosi and Meghan McCain.

And then there's Fox News itself, which, by way of defending Kelly's honor, decried Trump's "endless barrage of crude and sexist assaults." Keep in mind that this network's paranoia about powerful women extended to the Disney movie "Frozen," which it suggested was a vehicle for mocking and demonizing men.

Misogynist or not, there's little dispute that Trump is an opportunist. He may not hate women, but he sure is tapping into the anger and anxiety of many who do. That's dangerous, but so is allowing the overt, clownish sexism employed by Trump to obscure the more insidious brand of his GOP counterparts. Because bullying comments are nothing compared to bullying laws.

Tribune Content Agency Meghan Daum is a Los Angeles Times columnist.

Commentary: This is white privilege

Christine Emba, January 25, 2016, *The Chicago Tribune*

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/commentary/ct-white-privilege-is-real-20160125-story.html>

- 4 (...) What is white privilege? It's the social advantage that comes from being seen as the norm in the United States, automatically conferred irrespective of wealth, gender or other factors. It smooths out life, but in a way that's barely noticeable — unless it doesn't apply to you. In her 1988 paper "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," Wellesley College professor Peggy McIntosh described it as a set of unearned assets that
- 8 white people can count on cashing in each day even as they remain largely oblivious to their advantage. The concept has been percolating in academic circles ever since and is approaching broad usage among young people on the political left. Yet as Post reporter Janell Ross noted this month, it's a term that many Americans "instinctively don't trust or believe to be real," despite reams of evidence to the contrary. Black children — 4-
- 12 year-olds! — compose 18 percent of preschool enrollment but are given nearly half of all out-of-school suspensions. Job applicants with white-sounding names are 50 percent more likely to get called in for an interview. Black defendants are at least 30 percent more likely to be imprisoned than white defendants for the same crime.
- 16 Why does such a fraught piece of academic lingo matter now? Because people are beginning to talk about what it means in their own lives. At a time when minorities are growing more vocal about the ways in which their experiences in the United States differ from those of their white counterparts, the idea might finally be entering the mainstream. Two weeks ago, at a forum in Iowa, Democratic presidential candidate Hillary
- 20 Clinton was asked by an audience member to explain what white privilege meant to her and how it had affected her life. Her response? "Look, where do I start?"
- Yet every time white privilege is acknowledged, there is a backlash.
- When a version of this column ran online over the Martin Luther King Jr. weekend, the comments posted in
- 24 response were disappointing, to say the least. An overwhelming number of readers wrote to remind me that not all white people are privileged, a clear misreading of the term. Others denounced the very idea of white privilege, arguing that it was a falsehood invented to justify discrimination against white people at a time when we should all be moving past race. And many others suggested that perhaps black people deserved any
- 28 disadvantage they faced, trotting out old canards about black-on-white crime, black violence and how if black people for once just pulled up their pants, got off welfare and worked as hard as these commenters had, everything would be fine.
- Obviously not all white people are wealthy, and obviously many minorities are rich and powerful. Lots of
- 32 white people are disadvantaged. But white privilege is something specific and different from the ordinary rising and falling of a free society. It's the fact that simply by virtue of being a white person, of whatever socioeconomic status, you get the benefit of the doubt. That simply isn't the case for those of other races in the United States, no matter how wealthy, smart or hard-working they are. Even when black people work as hard
- 36 as or harder than their white counterparts, they have this additional barrier to surmount.
- This shouldn't be controversial. Agreeing that yes, there is some advantage to being white in the United States, doesn't then mean stripping white people of their jobs and possessions. A request to acknowledge one's privilege is just a reminder to be aware — aware that you might not be able to fully understand someone else's
- 40 experiences, that the assumptions you were brought up with may be blinding you, that some people may have to struggle for reasons foreign to you.
- Pointing out that white privilege exists isn't the same as accusing every white person of being a racist. And acknowledging that you might benefit from such privilege doesn't mean that you're "apologizing for being
- 44 white" or joining the ranks of those dreaded "social justice warriors." The most heartening comments I received last week were those from readers who understood that. Rather than reacting defensively, they asked: What's next?
- Here's what's next.
- 48 Generally, we expect those with advantages to help out those who are disadvantaged. The leg up provided by white privilege offers a chance to do just that. Understanding that you benefit from white privilege offers the freedom to amplify important issues in ways that those without it cannot. It represents an opportunity to speak out more loudly against injustice, knowing you're better protected from negative outcomes. It's the ability to
- 52 use the access you're given to create opportunity and space for others.
- The use of white privilege tends to be unintentional. White privilege isn't asked for, but it's also not earned. The advantages it brings are uncomfortable to acknowledge and easy to take for granted. But they shouldn't remain invisible. There's no way to level the playing field unless we first can all see how uneven it is.

The self-inflicted dangers of the EU referendum

Martin Wolf, *Financial Times*, May 26 2016.



Cameron might soon be known as the man who left the UK in far-from-splendid isolation

What were they thinking? It is extraordinary to read a succession of official reports arguing, rightly, that a vote to leave the EU would impose long-term damage and a short-term shock. What sort of government would run such a risk, particularly when the economy has barely recovered from the financial crisis of less than a decade ago? The answer is one that has put the needs of short-term party management above its responsibility for the country's welfare. David Cameron, prime minister, might soon be known as the man who left the UK in far-from-splendid isolation.

The Treasury has already argued that leaving the EU might lower real gross domestic product by between 3.4 and 9.5 per cent in the long term. This is broadly in line with estimates from other reputable forecasters. Patrick Minford of Cardiff University, a proponent of leaving, argues that the UK would enjoy a jump of 4 per cent in aggregate economic welfare after leaving the EU and adopting free trade (an unlikely choice). But this result is an outlier. It rests on implausible assumptions, not least on the impact of EU non-tariff barriers on domestic prices.

The Treasury has now followed up with a report on the short-term consequences of a vote to leave. In summarising the results, George Osborne, the chancellor of the exchequer, has stated that the UK would suffer a "do-it-yourself" recession if it decided to leave. One might better call it a "do-it-himself" recession. For it was the government's decision to take this risk.

The new report's main scenario predicts that GDP would be 3.6 per cent lower after two years than if the UK voted to remain, unemployment would be 520,000 higher and the pound would be 12 per cent lower. Under a worse scenario, GDP could be 6 per cent lower, unemployment 820,000 higher and sterling 15 per cent lower. The Institute for Fiscal Studies adds that, instead of an improvement of £8bn a year in the fiscal position, as the net contribution to the EU fell, the budget deficit might be between £20bn and £40bn higher in 2019-20 than otherwise, sharply slowing the planned fiscal consolidation.

Indeed, the Treasury argues, plausibly, that the very possibility of a vote to leave is already having an impact on the economy. But an actual vote to do so in June's referendum would crystallise this risk and create significant and immediate effects, via three channels.

The first of these would be the tendency of households and businesses to adjust at once to becoming permanently poorer. This would lead to significant cuts in consumption and investment.

20 The second effect would come from prolonged uncertainty about how the UK's relations with the EU would work out. It is difficult to exaggerate the scale of this uncertainty. After a vote to leave, the country would not know the complexion of its new government, the UK's desired approach to renegotiation of its relations with the EU, or the response of the other members, let alone any final outcome. The uncertainty could also be long-lasting. Even the formation of a new government and agreement on its new approach might prove difficult. The likely leaders of a new government have 35 also said things in this campaign that must hinder the chances of reaching an amicable settlement with EU partners.

The third effect would be the shift in financial conditions. Markets would at once reassess the UK's economic prospects. Asset prices, including the exchange rate (as the Bank of England has already noted), are likely to adjust downwards immediately. An appreciable increase in the risk premia on 40 UK assets could emerge. Asset price volatility would also increase. The BoE might face a difficult dilemma, since there is likely to be a simultaneous rise in expected inflation and a decline in expected output in the short term.

Official sources have described, in painful and quite plausible detail, how far the referendum unleashed by this government is a risky and dangerous gamble with the health of a fragile post- 45 crisis economy. This is apart from the risks to the future cohesion of the UK and, quite possibly, of the EU, too.

This referendum is, arguably, the most irresponsible act by a British government in my lifetime. To the objection that this is to deny democracy, one can respond that the country was a successful democracy well before it embarked upon such referendums. Furthermore, the right time for a 50 referendum would be when the UK is asked to accept further treaty changes or some other significant alteration in its position in the bloc. Right now one can only hope that the country does not soon learn what it means to divorce in haste and repent at leisure.

“Mistrust in politicians drives Brexiters”

Tobias Buck, *Financial Times*, June 15, 2016

Ann Potts has insurrection on her mind. With her elegant twin-set, pearl necklace and the clipped tones that betray a life spent in and around the British military, the 72-year-old does not resemble a revolutionary in the least. But today she is pacing the streets of Bracknell, a town in prosperous Berkshire, trying to win over local shoppers to a distinctly anti-establishment message.

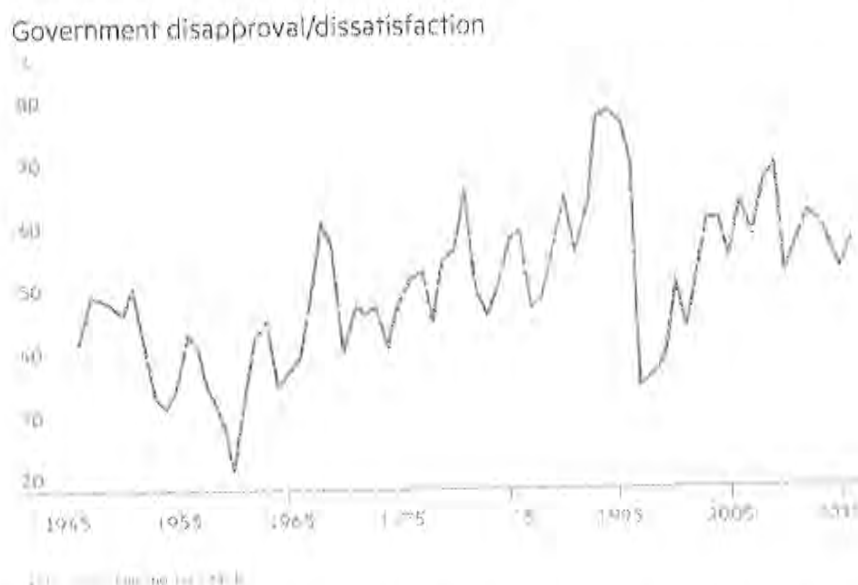
- 5 Together with fellow activists from Bracknell4Brexit, a local campaign group, Ms Potts is telling passers-by to ignore what the prime minister says, ignore what the Bank of England says, ignore what the US president says — and vote for a British exit from the EU in next week’s referendum. “We want to be our own people,” she says.

- 10 In 1975, when Britain held a referendum on membership of the European bloc, she voted in favour (“Because I listened to all the rubbish they told us!”). But the decades since have darkened her feelings both for the EU and for the political establishment. “I trust political leaders less than I used to,” she says. “They have not been honest with themselves, and they have not been honest with the people.”

- 15 Ms Potts is far from alone. To millions of voters up and down the country, the referendum campaign has brought home just how little faith they have in Britain’s politicians and parties, business lobbies and trade unions, think-tanks and investment banks.

Along with bodies such as the International Monetary Fund and the OECD (not to mention President Barack Obama), they have all issued stark warnings against Brexit.

- 20 But their interventions have done little or nothing to stop the Leave camp from pulling into the lead in recent polls.



- 25 “For some, this is simply a vote against the establishment,” observes Justin Bellhouse, the spokesman for Bracknell4Brexit. Like other Brexit campaigners, Mr Bellhouse reels off a list of scandals and broken promises — from government vows to clamp down on migration to a 2009 parliamentary expenses scandal. “It’s about the blatant lies. When the lies just keep on coming people say: how can I trust these people any longer?”

The rise in anti-establishment sentiment goes far beyond the UK — as shown by support for Donald Trump in the US presidential race and advances made by populist movements on the left and the right throughout continental Europe.

Neither is mistrust in politicians a new phenomenon, argues Will Jennings, a professor of politics at Southampton University. He has studied British attitudes towards the political establishment since the 1940s. The conclusion: trust has eroded steadily over decades, but is now running alarmingly low.

The UK's Mass Observation archive, which collects diaries and other private correspondence, shows that people today write about doctors, the clergy and lawyers in more or less the same way as they did back in 1945. That is not the case with politicians, as a recent paper co-authored by Prof Jennings points out: "Citizens now described their 'hatred' for politicians who made them 'angry', 'incensed', 'outraged', 'disgusted' and 'sickened'."

Among the words used for politicians, the paper adds, are arrogant, boorish, corrupt, creepy, devious, loathsome, lying, parasitical, pompous, shameful, sleazy, slippery, spineless, traitorous, weak and wet. As Prof Jennings says, "whatever measure you use political mistrust is rising — you see a generalised malaise".

Dr Phillip Lee, the Conservative member of parliament for Bracknell, offers a curious illustration of the trend. Aside from his parliamentary duties, he continues to practise as a doctor — still one of the most trusted professions. He quips that on days when he does medical work in the morning before heading to Westminster for a vote: "I can feel the trust ebbing away in an afternoon."

Dr Lee adds that "there is a fundamental breakdown in trust not just between voters and politicians but also with the BBC, the Bank of England, the City of London and so on. Where do you find truth these days?"

Often-cited causes of this breakdown range from high-profile cases of wrongdoing — such as the parliamentary expenses scandal — to the recent economic and financial crisis.

Looming behind is the widening chasm between booming multicultural London (expected to back EU membership) and the more Eurosceptic rest of England. "Much of the establishment has no idea what working class people outside London think," says Charles Grant, director of the Centre of European Reform, a supporter of the Remain campaign.

In return, Mr Grant says: "Our parliamentary class is treated with contempt, so when the establishment says 'vote for this, we know what is good for you' that has little effect. And the same is true for the City of London. The financial services industry is pretty unpopular."

Indeed, Brexit campaigners argue that interventions from "experts" do more to help than to hinder their cause. Tom Banks, the Vote Leave regional director for Yorkshire, says his campaign office saw a spike in interest and support after Mr Obama's speech against Brexit and the publication of Brexit-critical reports from the Treasury and the IMF. "All these reports and doomsday predictions are only going to make people believe politicians even less," he argues. (...)

“Nicola Sturgeon: Brexit would leave Scots at risk from Tory right”

TOM PETERKIN, *The Scotsman*, 15 June 2016

Nicola Sturgeon has warned a vote to leave the EU would leave Scotland at risk from what would become the most right-wing UK Conservative government in modern times.

The First Minister made the dramatic claim today as she steps up her involvement in the campaign for a Remain vote.

- 5 With opinion polls suggesting that the UK will vote for Brexit on 23 June, Ms Sturgeon’s remarks signalled a change of tone from her previous criticism of the Remain campaign for being too negative.

- 10 Instead of focussing on the positive arguments for European Union membership, the SNP leader claimed Brexit would leave the UK at the mercy of the Conservative right which would attempt to capitalise on a Leave vote.

She branded the campaign for Britain to exit the EU, which has been led by figures such as Boris Johnson and Michael Gove, as being “a bid for a right-wing Tory takeover of the reins of power in the UK”.

- 15 Ms Sturgeon’s comments were immediately attacked by the Leave campaign as “Project McFear”. Urging people across Scotland to back a vote to Remain, the First Minister said: “The people leading the case for a vote to leave the EU are on the right of the Conservative Party and will take an ‘out’ vote as their signal to make their power grab complete.

“Make no mistake – a Leave win would be a victory for politicians who actually believe George Osborne and David Cameron are moderates, and it would leave Scotland at their mercy.

- 20 “Outside the EU but within the UK, with most economic power still concentrated at Westminster, Scotland would be left vulnerable to the most right-wing Tory government in modern history.

“And if we leave Europe, they will take it as a green light to scrap workers’ rights and employment protection, slash public spending as part of their ideologically driven austerity obsession – and would target Scotland for extra cuts.

- 25 “There should be no doubt in people’s minds – if Leave wins then Scottish workers and family budgets will be in the firing line.”

Tom Harris, director of Scottish Vote Leave, said Ms Sturgeon’s comments were “disappointing”.

- 30 “With less than a week to go, here comes Project McFear from the First Minister. So much for Nicola’s promise of a positive message. The First Minister is now engaged in a desperate bid to scare Scottish voters to distract from the failing message of the Remain campaign.

“Just six months ago her Europe spokesman attempted to set a positive tone for the campaign by declaring that his party believed the UK could be successful outside the EU.

“That was a breath of fresh air – today is more like the smell of panic in Bute House.

“What Nicola forgets is that if we leave the EU it is her own government that would gain control in

Scotland, not David Cameron – control over fishing, agriculture and important social and environmental legislation as well as other areas would be devolved to the Scottish Parliament.

“Leaving the EU puts the power of Scotland’s future into Scotland’s hands.”

The First Minister’s intervention came after a day which saw Labour up its efforts to persuade its wavering voters to back the Remain cause.

40 Deputy leader Tom Watson said the EU’s free movement rules could be changed in future because of concerns about immigration and insisted a decision to stay in the EU would not mean the end of the reform agenda in the bloc.

Party leader Jeremy Corbyn warned the NHS would be at risk if the country votes to leave the EU as he pleaded for his party’s supporters and trade unionists to back the Remain cause.

45 Mr Corbyn said Labour would be making “the strongest case we can” for a Remain win following criticism about his level of involvement in the campaign.

Mr Watson said immigration was the issue which had been the backdrop to every election in Britain over the past decade.

“Woe betide politicians that don’t listen to what voters tell them,” he said.

50 He added: “I think we have to reassure people that if they vote Remain that isn’t the end of the reform package for Europe. You know, I think a future Europe will have to look at things like the free movement of labour rules.”

Mr Watson also urged David Cameron to push for a fund to target support at communities where public services were being stretched as a result of immigration.

55 He added that immigration was also an issue in other EU countries and the way to address it was to retain the UK’s seat at the negotiating table.

“It seems to me this just isn’t a phenomenon that affects the UK. It’s European-wide. And if we want to change the rules on the free movement of labour, you have to be in the European Union to do that,” he said.

60 “And I would imagine that a future UK government, when it comes to the next iteration of reform in Europe, will have to engage in that process.”

Asked if a Labour administration would suggest a control on the numbers coming to the UK, he said: “I think it’s very likely that a Labour government would want to reform the European Union.”

Will pollsters redeem themselves in 2016?

By David Cowling Editor, BBC Political Research Unit

27 December 2015, BBC.co.uk (<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-35151201>)

There is a theory that political polls in the UK suffer a car crash once every 20 years or so.

In 1970, the majority of polls suggested a Labour victory but the Conservatives won the election.

In 1992, 38 out of 50 campaign polls suggested narrow Labour leads yet the Conservatives won with a seven-point lead in the national vote.

5 And in 2015, out of 92 campaign polls, 17 registered a dead heat between the Conservatives and Labour and 42 recorded Labour leads when the election outcome was a seven-point Conservative lead.

Margin between Conservative and Labour	All polls	Conservative leads	Labour leads
0	17	-	-
1	32	15	17
2	22	7	15
3	10	3	7
4	7	5	2
5	1	1	-
6	3	2	1
Total	92	33	42

10 In retrospect, 2015 began with powerful indicators of the shape of things to come. The Lib Dems languished well below the 24% share of the vote they received in the 2010 general election, UKIP maintained their place as the third party in GB-wide opinion polls, and the SNP totally dominated Scottish public opinion.

However, on the critical issue of support for Conservative versus Labour, the polls in January 2015 overwhelmingly suggested both were neck and neck and that a hung parliament was the most likely outcome in May.

Benefit of hindsight

45 Looking below the surface of the headline voting intention figures, Mori's question on satisfaction/dissatisfaction with party leaders in January 2015 found David Cameron at -17, Ed Miliband at -35 and Nick Clegg at -39.

And in the same month, a Lord Ashcroft poll recorded a 15-point lead for the Conservatives on which party was best to manage the economy.

80 Another Lord Ashcroft poll in February found David Cameron with a 31% lead over Ed Miliband as the one best at "doing the job of prime minister overall".

25 A number of people suggest that if we had all paid more attention to these findings then the eventual outcome would not have been such a surprise. Given the result it is difficult to disagree with such advice - but all of us would have benefited if more of it had been given before rather than after polling day.

In the event, the final 2015 election campaign polls from nine polling companies resulted in three giving Labour leads, three offering a dead heat and three suggesting Conservative leads - two registering one-point leads and the other a lead of three points - far below the eventual seven-point gap.

Weighting

30 Within 24 hours of the election result, the British Polling Council launched an independent inquiry into the performance of the polls. Chaired by Prof Patrick Sturgis and assisted by colleagues such as Prof Jane Green, their conclusions will be made public in mid-January.

35 They will be looking closely at a number of possible explanations: late swing, shy Tories, lazy Labour voters, differential turnout, sample weighting and whether we are any longer able to contact representative samples of the population.

But the impact of the 2015 polling experience has already been felt. During the months May-December following the 2010 general election, more than 190 voting intention polls were published; in the comparable period in 2015, the figure was 34.

40 Organisations that commission Westminster voting polls may not have lost their appetite completely but they seem to have been on a pretty fierce diet since May.

However, those who thought the opinion polls would take a long time to emerge from the rubble of the May 2015 general election appear to have been rather premature.

45 Polling on the forthcoming European referendum is alive and kicking; and the seeming neck-and-neck support for "Remain" and "Leave" that emerged in December will do little to discourage the commissioning of further polls on the subject.

How the polls perform in predicting the result of that referendum, following the scale of their failure in the general election, will be of great significance.

50 Will the pollsters prove that 2015 was simply the latest in a 20-year cycle of significant mishits, or will their performance lead us to conclude that there are some really fundamental problems facing political polling in this country?

'It's time for a federal UK in which devolved governments raise their own money' says leading think tank'

By David Williamson, 5 Nov 2015, Walesonline.com

The highly influential right-leaning think tank The Institute of Economic Affairs is backing a change to a federal structure for the UK

One of the UK's most influential right-leaning think tanks has come out for a move to a federal system in which each layer of government must raise the cash it spends in almost all areas.

- 5 The Institute of Economic Affairs – traditionally seen as a champion of Thatcherite thinking – argues that the UK Government's introduction of English Votes for English Laws (EVEL) is “no solution to problems caused by devolution”.

10 Author Professor Philip Booth argues that under today's devolution arrangements “there is far more devolution of spending than of revenue raising” and this is “probably the worst of all possible combinations.”

He writes it is “crucial” that “revenue must be raised by the layer of government that is undertaking spending” and that “one layer of government must not bail out the debts incurred by any other layer of government”.

- 15 The paper comes as the debate continues about whether a referendum should be required before the National Assembly gains income tax-altering powers.

Before the introduction of a federal system, Prof Booth argues, there should be referendums in each of the UK's nations – and Scotland would once again have the opportunity to vote for independence.

- 20 He writes: “The referenda could pose alternatives such as the status quo or full independence for Scotland and the other nations. However, the main proposal would be for a federal system to be created.

“Within that federal system, Wales and Northern Ireland would have to decide whether they should be independent nations in the same way as Scotland or join England while having a degree of devolution.”

- 25 Under his proposals, the federal government would have “a very limited number of powers including defence, foreign affairs and border control and a small parliament and executive.”

30 The federal parliament would have to be prevented from clawing back powers, he writes, stating: “Federal states have a tendency towards centralisation, the US being an important example. Centralisation would be prevented by requiring unanimity among the parliaments of all the individual nations as well as agreement of the federal parliament before any further powers were passed to the federal (UK) level.”

35 Within each nation, he continues: “[R]esponsibility for the following should be transferred from national government to the local level: environmental policy; working-age welfare; education and health; granting of permissions for and regulation of natural resource exploitation; lifestyle regulation; policing; and housing and planning.”

Wales 'over-represented'

Claiming that today “Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are over-represented in the UK parliament,” he writes: “[In] England, there are nearly 30% more electors per parliamentary seat than there are in Wales... Overall, therefore, the devolution settlement creates unrepresentative government and is likely to create a bias towards big government.”

40 He states there are a median average of 56,800 voters per seat in Wales, compared to 72,400 in England.

Pressing for change, he writes: “The UK has the most centralised government of the G7, as measured by the proportion of revenue raised by sub-central government. In the UK, only 5% of revenue is raised locally, compared with 50% in Canada and 13% in France, which is the next most
45 centralised country by this measure.”

Launching the proposals, Mr Booth, who is Professor of Finance, Public Policy and Ethics at St Mary’s University, Twickenham, said: “The UK’s approach to devolution is incoherent and unstable. It’s clear that the only long-term stable solution is to create a proper federal state with a very small number of powers held at UK level.

50 “All other issues should be the responsibility of separate governments in Scotland and the Rest of the UK (or England, Wales and Northern Ireland). There should then be a sweeping decentralisation of regulation, tax and spending powers to local government.

“With very few exceptions, each layer of government must raise what it spends.”

55 Shadow Welsh Secretary Nia Griffith said: “This report highlights the flaws of the Government’s botched plans for English votes for English laws. Rather than being a genuine attempt to reform the Commons, they have more to do with the Conservative Party’s self-interest in increasing their Parliamentary majority.

60 “The new system prevents Welsh MPs from voting on issues which directly affect their constituents and has weakened Wales’ voice at Westminster. People in Wales want their MPs to be able to speak up on cross-border services but this crazy reform could put paid to that.

“Serious questions about how the country is governed would be best addressed through a UK-wide constitutional convention, rather than the Government’s rushed and highly partisan approach.”

65 Plaid Cymru MP Jonathan Edwards MP said: “English Votes for English Laws is nothing but a sticking-plaster solution which creates even more constitutional complexities and consigns Welsh MPs to a second-class status. In the very least we need to be moving to a model in which all constituent parts of the UK are treated with equal respect.

70 “The current Wales Bill obviously falls far short of delivering this and is a symptom of the lack of statesmanship by the Westminster elite. The gross geographical wealth inequalities which exist within the British state are a direct result of the over-centralised grip of the Treasury on economic policy.”

Cities Should Have Room for Everyone

Instead, too many have become havens for wealthy singles (and their dogs)

Michael Barone May 31, 2016, *National Review*, <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/436012/cities-include-everyone-not-just-wealthy-singles>

- 5 Nearly a century ago, in 1920, the Census Bureau caused a ruckus when it announced that, for the first time, a majority of Americans lived in cities — even though its definition of a city included every hamlet with a population of 2,500 and above. Today a majority of Americans live in what are by any reasonable definition very large cities, metropolitan areas with populations greater than 1 million. But the urban-planning profession remains fixated on just one small portion of these metropolises, the central city
- 10 downtowns, though none outside New York contains more than 10 percent of metropolitan-area jobs. That's one of the lessons of Joel Kotkin's new book, *The Human City*, which takes a wider and longer view. Kotkin shows how cities developed as religious, imperial, commercial, and industrial centers. And he shows how what planners disparage as suburbs and sprawl emerged a century ago as natural parts of the city — and are now the home and workplace of the large majority of American city dwellers.
- 15 That's not how planners like to think about cities. Their focus is typically visual, and on the exterior of buildings and the cityscape, easily reproduced in glossy coffee-table books, rather than on the interiors where people spend most of their hours. They take their cues from 20th-century architects such as Le Corbusier, who wanted to knock down all of Paris's historic structures and replace them with a few skyscrapers rising from parkland.
- 20 There is an obvious authoritarian thrust here. It is visible in Kotkin's home state of California, where zoning restrictions and NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) protests prevent new construction in coastal metropolises. Governor Jerry Brown is pushing policies that would concentrate new housing in high-rise clusters around mass-transit stations, with ready access to bike paths and walking trails but not to streets and roads for private cars. It's a good thing to offer people such a choice. It's a bad thing to deny them
- 25 any others. The result is that housing costs in coastal metropolises have skyrocketed far above the level that is affordable for median-income singles, much less married couples with children. These cities are increasingly the home of the connected rich and the disconnected poor. They have the nation's highest levels of economic inequality and the highest percentage of singles. The central city of San Francisco has
- 30 80,000 more dogs than children. As Kotkin points out, the rationales for confining development in this way don't stand up to scrutiny. Urban planners argue that suburbs, whose residents drive dozens of miles each day, waste more energy than high-rise central cities do. Data don't bear that out. It takes lots of energy to build and maintain the high-rises, more than enough to compensate for less driving. Central cities are also portrayed as more ethnically diverse. But that's not necessarily true: As Kotkin
- 35 notes, blacks have been moving to suburbs, and most Asian and Latino immigrants head there directly. Meanwhile, the hippest neighborhoods of San Francisco and Portland, Brooklyn and Boston are becoming more and more monochromatically white. And it turns out that tightly packing people from various ethnic backgrounds into small central city neighborhoods doesn't promote harmonious interaction. On the contrary, as Harvard sociologist Robert Putnam found to his horror, it reduces social
- 40 trust and social connectedness. People hunker down and avoid contact with others. You get more social connectedness and higher levels of trust in the supposedly dreary and dull suburbs. One reason is that people with children tend to head toward the suburbs, and childrearing encourages participation in school- and church-related voluntary associations. Another is that suburbs, unlike central cities or university campuses, actually have populations with
- 45 diverse opinions. On any suburban cul-de-sac you can both Republican and Democratic voters. Good luck trying that in Manhattan or Harvard. Kotkin brings a useful worldwide perspective to his subject. He appreciates the strengths and shortcomings of Singapore, understands that most Europeans, like most Americans, live in suburbs and notes that population growth rates have been falling in megacities such as Mexico City, Sao Paulo,
- 50 Tokyo, and Beijing, as well as in New York and Los Angeles. Some cities evidently get too big for people. Which is Kotkin's point: Cities exist for people, not the other way around. He champions "urban pluralism," cities that have room for singles who think they're the wave of the future, and, especially, for parents who are actually creating and raising the citizens of the future. — Michael Barone is the senior political
- 55 analyst for the *Washington Examiner* and a resident fellow at American Enterprise Institute.

This Is Not about Jim Crow

DAVID HARSANYI May 13, 2016 *National Review*

<http://www.nationalreview.com/article/435339/barack-obama-transgender-bathroom-anti-federalist-push?target=topic&tid=5958>

Some of us care little about the debate over public bathrooms. We do, however, care about the ongoing destruction of federalism, individual choice, and good-faith debate in America. One reliable way to quash dissent and force moral codes on others is to liken a cause to that of the 1960s civil-rights fight, because every liberal issue is situated somewhere on the great historical arc of “equality” and “justice.” If people stand against even one of these causes — which were once great, but are increasingly trivial today — they have, according to the cultural imperialists of the Obama administration, aligned themselves with the Ku Klux Klan. Attorney General Loretta Lynch announced on Monday that the Department of Justice was filing a federal civil-rights lawsuit against the state of North Carolina, Governor Pat McCrory, the North Carolina Department of Public Safety and the University of North Carolina for passing the “controversial law” (this is the go-to characterization of conservative bills that pass with healthy majorities) requiring transgender people to use public bathrooms matching their birth certificate. She had this to say: “This is not the first time that we have seen discriminatory responses to historic moments of progress for our nation. We saw it in the Jim Crow laws that followed the Emancipation Proclamation. We saw it in fierce and widespread resistance to *Brown v. Board of Education*. And we saw it in the proliferation of state bans on same-sex unions intended to stifle any hope that gay and lesbian Americans might one day be afforded the right to marry.”

Likening a spat over biologically segregated male and female bathrooms to the genuinely violent, systematic, state-sponsored, and society-wide bigotry that took place in this country for a century is both intellectually and morally corrupt. It’s not all a continuum. Yet the Obama administration peddles these kinds of risible comparisons for the cause of self-aggrandizement all the time. For starters, the scale of these events is in no sense comparable. The Jim Crow laws passed by states and localities to enforce racial segregation stripped millions of African Americans not only of their liberty, but of their dignity. The state punished them for their skin color, and kept them uneducated and poor. They could not escape their situation without more government interference.

The present situation is significantly different and less dire in every possible sense. It is the sort of social problem generally worked out among people in this country without unelected civil-rights commissions’ punishing business owners for thought crimes. Under North Carolina’s law, no coffee shop or big-box store — no private company — is stopped from having its own desired bathroom setup. I’m pretty sure most voters don’t comprehend this fact through the distorted coverage of this law in the news.

North Carolina and other states have preemptively moved forward in creating these kinds of bills to head off the federal government’s redefining gender. But it’s too late. The fact is, at any point, the government can simply announce that a man can choose to be a woman and vice versa. This announcement would then compel everyone in the country to accept this reality. Yet there is currently no federal definition of what transgender is, other than self-identification, which can mean anything. Vanita Gupta, head of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division, says: “Transgender men are men. . . . Transgender women are women.” So sayeth Gupta, so say us all — or else. And now, 323 million people must adhere to the Obama administration’s relativistic notions of nature and gender.

In a broader sense, the suit is symbolic of the federal government’s eight-year crusade to decimate any semblance of federalism and implement progressive morality. The administration ignores state laws that conflict with federal policy when it approves of the law, and it sues states when it does not. States that pass law-enforcement bills that President Obama finds unsatisfactory will see the full force of the Justice Department. Those states with drug-legalization laws and immigration laws he does like have nothing to worry about, even if the laws conflict with federal law. Whether or not one agrees with these moves in theory — and I am liberal on drug legalization and immigration — allowing Washington, D.C., to selectively enforce law conflicts with the kind of republicanism that allows us to be diverse and deal with unique problems locally. Finally, it takes a special kind of audacity for someone working for President Obama — who was a pretend opponent of same-sex marriage for years — to accuse someone who stood against same-sex couples’ “right to marry” of being a modern-day George Wallace. Not to mention the fact that Lynch was first appointed by President Bill Clinton, the man who not only signed the Defense of Marriage Act, but admired and learned his politics from real-life segregationists. Such an indictment just adds a level of absurdity to these scurrilous attacks on people who are making good-faith arguments. — David Harsanyi is a senior editor at *The Federalist* and the author of *The People Have Spoken (and They Are Wrong): The Case Against Democracy*.